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A

MEMOIR

OF

S. S. PRENTISS.

VOL. II.

A

MEMOIR

OF

S. S. PRENTISS.

DISCARD

EDITED BY HIS BROTHER.

VOL. II.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 145 NASSAU STREET.
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER XIV.

Return to Washington—Letters—Speech on the Defalcations of Public Officers—Extracts—Description of a Speech on the Navy—Letters—His Congressional Life, ... 9

CHAPTER XV.

Reminiscences of Mr. Prentiss by Henry A. Wise, ... 51

CHAPTER XVI.

The Wilkinson Trial—Mr. Prentiss' Address to the Jury, ... 66

CHAPTER XVII.

Return to Vicksburg—Resumes the Practice of Law—Letters—Is solicited to become a Candidate for the Senate of the United States—Correspondence on the Subject—Letter to the Whigs of Madison County—Interest felt in the Election in other Parts of the Country—Letter to him from J. J. Crittenden—The Canvass—Letters, ... 114

CHAPTER XVIII.

Letters—Presidential Election of 1840—Letters—Mr. Prentiss' Exertions—Visits the North—Invitations to attend Whig Conventions and Mass-Meetings—Speeches at Portland and Newark—Anxiety to hear him—Returns Home by Sea—Canvasses Mississippi as Candidate for Presidential Elector—Letters. . 149

CHAPTER XIX.

Domestic Correspondence—His Marriage—Letters—His Course in Relation to the Gubernatorial Election of 1843—Visit and Letter from Henry Clay—Letters, 185

22063

CHAPTER XX.

Mississippi Repudiation—Mr. Prentiss' Opposition to it—His Popular Addresses on the Subject—Argument at Fayette against the Doctrine that one Generation cannot bind another—Col. Joseph B. Cobb's Reminiscences of a Speech at Jackson before the Whig Convention of 1843—Letter to the Poet Wordsworth—Mr. Wordsworth's Reply—The Question of Repudiation finally decided by the Supreme Court of Mississippi, ... 239

CHAPTER XXI.

Reminiscences of Mr. Prentiss by Balie Peyton, ... 271

CHAPTER XXII.

Recollection of him in 1843-4—Speeches at a Whig Convention at New Orleans—Visits the North—Political Addresses during his Journey—The Presidential Election of 1844—Subject-matter of Mr. Prentiss' Addresses—Return South, and Speech at New Orleans on the Fine Arts—Letters—Invitations to attend Whig Conventions and Barbacues in other States—Visit to Nashville—Letter from Ex-Governor Jones—Speeches at Natchez, Jackson, and Vicksburg—Disappointment at the Result of the Election, ... 292

CHAPTER XXIII.

Decision of the Supreme Court of the U. S. involving his Title to the Vicksburg Commons—Letters—Removal to New Orleans—Public Dinners tendered him on leaving Mississippi—His Settlement in New Orleans—Withdrawal from Parties and Devotion to his Profession—His Legal Career—Anecdotes—Trial of Phelps, the Robber—His Character and Attainments as a Lawyer and Advocate, . 354

CHAPTER XXIV.

Address before the New England Society of New Orleans—Letters—Address on Behalf of the Starving Poor of Ireland—Death of his Eldest Sister—Letters—Address to the Returned Volunteers of Gen. Taylor's Army—Letters, . 395

CHAPTER XXV.

New Year's Letter to his Mother—Difficulty with a Grandson of Henry Clay—His Account of the Affair—Reminiscences of it by Balie Peyton and Richard T. Archer—Letter from Mr. Clay—State of the Country early in 1848—Questions growing out of the Mexican War—Mr. Prentiss' Speech at a Meeting to nominate Delegates to the Whig National Convention—His Exertions during the Canvass—Views of Slavery and the Wilmot Proviso—Gen. Taylor—Letters. . . 434

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Prentiss' Character as a Popular Orator—The Sources of his Power—Misconceptions on the Subject—Resemblance between him and Patrick Henry—Peculiarities of his Oratory—Its Strength lay chiefly in the Subject-matter of his

Addresses—His Political Opinions—Distrust of mere Politicians—His Views respecting the Form of our Government—It is not a simple Democracy—Its Practical Methods—The Will of the People not found in Primary Assemblies, or Mass Meetings; but only in the legitimate Action of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Authorities—American System of Liberty essentially Historical, and Peculiar to Ourselves—Evils in the working of the Government—Executive Patronage—Extracts from Calhoun on the Subject—Debasement of the Presidential Office—His Opinion and Abhorrence of Demagogues—Extract from Aristotle—His Patriotic Hopes, ... 467

CHAPTER XXVII.

Personal Traits—His Disregard of Money—His Generosity—His Interest in Young Men and Kindness to them—Character of his Friendships—Sympathy with the Poor, the Sick, and Afflicted—Letters addressed to him by Strangers—His Domestic Life, ... 503

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Letters—Severe Illness—Visits the North with his Family—Reminiscences of this Visit—Fishing Excursions and Rides about Newburyport—His Interest in the Hungarian Struggle—Trips to Boston, New Bedford, and Martha's Vineyard—His Regard for Old Men—His Conversational Talent—Returns South—Letters—Rapid Failure of his Health—A Reminiscence by Col. Cobb—Devotion to his Professional Labors—Is invited to address the Story Law Association—Letters—Approach of the Final Struggle—His last Appearance in Court—Letters to his Wife—Sudden Attack—Is removed to Natchez—The Closing Scene, . . 524

APPENDIX.

Proceedings of the Bar of New Orleans, and Eulogy by Judge Bullard, . 563
Extracts from the New Orleans *Delta*, ... 570
Notice by J. F. H. Claiborne, Esq., ... 572
Proceedings of the Bar of Natchez, ... 573
Proceedings of the Bar of Jackson, ... 574
Eulogy on S. S. Prentiss by Judge Mc Caleb, ... 575
Letter from Henry Clay, ... 580
Extract of a Letter from J. J. Crittenden, ... 581

MEMOIR OF S. S. PRENTISS.

CHAPTER XIV.

Return to Washington—Letters—Speech on the Defalcations of Public Officers—Extracts—Description of a Speech on the Navy—Letters—His Congressional Life.

ÆT. 30. 1838–9.

He thus announced his return to Washington, in a letter dated December 18, 1838:—

I arrived in the city last evening, in good health and spirits. I came by the way of New Orleans, Mobile, Montgomery, Charleston, &c., and had a tedious, but in some respects pleasant trip; having never before travelled through the same section of country. I was detained by professional business, which prevented me from being here at the opening of the session; but do not regret it, as nothing of much importance has yet transpired. I merely drop you this line in great haste, to apprise you of my safe arrival, and shall in a day or two write again.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA

WASHINGTON CITY, *Dec.* 28, 1838.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I wrote a hasty note upon my arrival here last week, promising to write again in a few days. I have delayed,

expecting to spend Christmas day in New York, and to write from there. In this anticipation I was disappointed. Our House adjourned over only for two days, and at the time of adjournment was engaged in an interesting discussion, in which I was desirous of participating; of course I had to give up my intention of going to New York. Yesterday I made a speech; my text was the corruption and profligacy of the present Administration, and I did not spare the lash, in exposing their folly and wickedness. The recent defalcations of Swartwout and others formed the subject of debate, which has been very warmly carried on for several days. I was honored with a very crowded and attentive auditory, and spoke about three hours. I do not know that I shall speak again during the session. I am heartily tired of the place, and should rejoice to return home to-morrow.

There is nothing new, and the Metropolis is extremely dull. A place less interesting, at least to me, could not be easily found. Every day's experience confirms me in the wisdom of my resolution to retire from public life, which is principally characterized, at this time, by ignorance, discourtesy, and profligacy. I wish you all a happy and a merry Christmas, and wish I was with you to partake of the good feelings and good cheer which always accompany this pleasant season. You must write me very often this winter, if your health will permit—but of that you must be extremely cautious, and if you find writing injurious you must omit it, though it will deprive me of much gratification. I am glad that Abby enjoyed her visit to New York so much, and returned in such improved health. My love to you all, and a thousand kind wishes accompany it.

Your affectionate

SERGEANT.

The speech, referred to in this letter, contains some things of which its author, on reflection, did not quite approve. The specimens which it gives of the correspondence carried on for several years between the Secretary of the Treasury and his defaulting subordinates, certainly justified the utmost severity of rebuke; the records of the government, it is to be

hoped, afford no parallel to this extraordinary correspondence. But aside from the political satire and invective, which in such a case were legitimate weapons, there are expressions of personal contempt that exceed the proprieties of parliamentary discussion. Perhaps the bitter assaults which had been made upon him, during the year, by the official organ and other prominent Administration journals, were in part the cause of these sharp and scornful expressions. Even his lameness was not always spared by his political enemies.

Mr. Thorpe very justly remarks: "I find this speech, which is far from being equal to a hundred of his that were never noticed beyond the fleeting hour of their delivery, crowded with figures, all beautiful, but in many instances lacking that depth of thought for which Mr. Prentiss was so remarkable. To me it seemed, when I read it, more like his conversation when he was warmed up by social intercourse, than like a speech."*

The following extracts, given with such slight omissions and occasional substitution of official for personal names as charity and respect for the dead seemed to require, contain the substance of this speech. It is a melancholy reflection, that the barbarous "*spoils system*," denounced by Mr. Prentiss with such righteous severity, should ever have been followed by his own party. Had anybody predicted, in 1838–9, what has actually occurred, the good men of that party would, probably, have exclaimed with Hazael: "*But what! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?*"† The history of the last fifteen years shows only too plainly that the "*spoils*" poison has infected the whole country, engendering a frantic lust of office, which, unless speedily checked, is likely in the end to brutalize and destroy the national life.

* *American Review*, 1851. † 2 *Kings*, viii. 13.

The House being in Committee of the Whole upon the President's Message (John Quincy Adams in the chair), Mr. Prentiss spoke as follows :

Mr. Chairman : —

I had intended, on a former occasion, to express my views upon some of the topics embraced in the President's message, more especially the subject of the recent defalcations. I am, however, so unfortunate as to be viewed by the official eye of this House through an inverted telescope, and it is not often that I can obtain the floor. With much pleasure, therefore, I avail myself of the opportunity at present afforded me. That portion of the message to which I shall principally turn my attention, to wit, the defalcations of the public officers, has been already ably considered by my honorable friend from Virginia (Mr. Wise), as well as by the distinguished member from Tennessee (Mr. Bell). But it is a subject which cannot be too often or too thoroughly discussed. Its examination will, I am confident, eviscerate more of the principles upon which this Government has for some years been administered, and furnish us more valuable lessons for future guidance, than any other matter that can occupy our deliberations. I am sorry to observe a rapidly increasing hostility upon this floor to the discussion of great political principles. One would suppose, in listening to some gentlemen, that Congress was constituted, like a county court, for the trial of petty individual claims, instead of being the great political tribunal of the nation, whose province and duty it is, not only to notice all important events in the action of the Government, but to investigate the causes from which they have resulted.

Defalcations of the most alarming character, and for an immense amount, carried on and concealed for a series of years by the collector of the principal commercial city of the Union, have been recently developed. The President has seen fit to call our particular attention to this case, and to make, in connection therewith, divers suggestions as to the best mode of preventing similar occurrences hereafter.

"It seems proper (says the President), that by an early enactment, similar to that of other countries, the application of public money, by an officer of the Government, to private uses, *should be made a felony, and visited with severe and ignominious punishment.*"

He further recommends that a committee of Congress be appointed to watch the officers who have the custody of the public moneys, and that they should "report to the Executive such defalcations as were found to exist, with a view to a prompt removal from office, unless the default was satisfactorily accounted for."

The Secretary of the Treasury has also given us a report upon this same subject, in which he expresses his astonishment that such an occurrence should have happened without his knowledge; exhibits, like the President, a most holy horror at the enormity of the offence; and recommends the appointment of an additional tribe of officers to watch over those already in power, as the best mode of avoiding similar mishaps in future.

To listen to the well-assumed astonishment of the President and Secretary at the discovery of Swartwout's peculations, one would readily suppose that defalcation, under the present Administration, like parricide among the ancients, had heretofore been a crime unknown, and consequently unprovided for by justice. Hearken to the philosophical musings of the President on this point:

"The Government, it must be admitted, has been from its commencement comparatively fortunate in this respect. But the appointing power cannot always be well advised in its selections, and the experience of every country has shown that public officers are not at all times proof against temptation."

Wonderful sagacity! Unparalleled discovery! Who will now deny the title of "magician" to the man who has developed the astounding fact "that public officers are not at all times proof against temptation?"

The embezzlements of Swartwout have caused this truth to flash upon the sagacious mind of the Chief Magistrate, and with

philanthropic eagerness he recommends that we put a stop to this new sort of wickedness, by making it a penitentiary offence.

Mr. Chairman, if I should tell you that all this is sheer hypocrisy—gross and wretched pretence—a tub thrown out to amuse the popular whale, and divert his attention from the miserable and leaky canoe which bears the fortunes of this Administration; if I should tell you that, during the last five or six years, a hundred cases of defalcation have occurred, more outrageous in principle, more profligate in character, than the one we are recommended to investigate; that the President has continued defaulters in office, knowing their violations of duty, knowing their appropriation of the public moneys to private uses; that the Secretary of the Treasury has, during that whole period, habitually connived at these defalcations, and extended over them the mantle of his protection; if I should tell you that these defalcations constitute a portion of the "*spoils system*"—that system which has been to this Administration what his flowing locks were to Samson—the secret of its strength; if I should tell you all this, I should tell you no more than I conscientiously believe: no more than I shall attempt to prove before this House and the country. These defalcations I shall trace to their origin, and not stop to inquire so much into their amounts, as into the causes which have led to them. It is not the question, Where is the money? but, Where is the guilt? that I wish to investigate. The recent developments to which our attention is invited, are but some of the bubbles that are every day breaking upon the surface of the still and mantling pool. I shall not stop to measure their relative size or color; but will, unpleasant as the task may be, dredge for the corrupt cause which lies at the bottom. These cases are but the windfalls from that tree of Sodom—*Executive patronage*. Heretofore, the representatives of the people have, in vain, urged an examination into the character of its fruit; but it has been guarded with more vigilance than were the golden apples of the Hesperides. Now, our attention is solicited to it by the President. Is he in earnest? Let him but give us a chance to shake

this tree, and he will find his rotten pippins falling from every limb and branch.

But our attention is called, particularly, to the case of Swartwout. The Administration has delivered him over to our tender mercies; they have dropped him as the bear, when hotly pursued, drops one of her cubs, for the purpose of distracting the attention of the hunter, and so escaping with the rest of her young. I, for one, shall not be thus diverted from my purpose, but will follow the dam to her den, and there, if possible, crush at once the whole brood.

Swartwout has been found out. This is the unpardonable sin with the present party in power. Their morality is the Spartan morality: not the *theft*, but the *discovery*, constitutes the crime. Sir, if every office-holder's mantle were thrown aside, how many, think you, would be found without a stolen fox fastened to the girdle?

Mr. Chairman, I have no confidence that the President has recommended this investigation in good faith, or that his partisans here intend to permit it. They dare not do it. They are not yet sufficiently maddened, scorpion-like, to dart the sting into their own desperate brain. No, sir, it is a mere *ruse*. Regardless of the maxim that "there is honor among thieves," the rest of the office-holders are very willing to turn State's evidence against Swartwout, to gain immunity for themselves, and favor with the commonwealth. Let the Administration give us a fair committee, favorable to investigation, not packed by the Speaker; throw open to us the doors of your Departments—those whited sepulchres, within whose secret vaults corruption has so long rioted and revelled; let your insolent subalterns be taught that they owe some allegiance to the laws; compel them to submit their official conduct to a rigid examination by this House: then, and not till then, will I believe them in earnest; then, and not till then, shall I expect any good to come of investigation. But, sir, though little is to be expected from the action of this House, I anticipate much good from the discussion. This hall is the ear of the nation; what is said here touches the auditory nerve of the whole country. Before this

mighty audience do I impeach both the President and the Secretary. * * I charge them with knowingly appointing and continuing in office public defaulters—men who had appropriated the public moneys to private use; who had committed, in office, acts of as great moral turpitude, and deserving as much odium, as attaches to the case of Swartwout; acts which the President now professes to think deserving of the penitentiary. I charge the Secretary, directly, with having caused, by negligence, and *knowing, willful connivance*, some of the most important defalcations which have occurred. I charge him specifically with having, in one case, literally watched a defalcation through a period of more than two years, and seen it gradually swell, during that time, to upwards of $100,000! I charge him with having permitted, in numberless instances, the repeated and continued neglect and violation of what he himself asserts to be the *paramount duty*, without removing from office, or even reprimanding the delinquents. I charge him with having, in his official capacity, received, and favorably considered, correspondence degrading to his high office, insulting to him as an honest man, and of a corrupt and profligate character.

Sir, the Secretary can only escape by the plea of "*non compos mentis.*" Out of his own mouth I will convict him; I will but let loose upon him the documents he himself has furnished, and, like the hapless Acteon, he will be torn to pieces by his own hounds.

Mr. Chairman, the cases which I am about to examine, in support of my positions, have been selected at random from the reports of the Secretary himself, and I present them merely as specimens; scores of the same sort—the phosphorescent glimmerings of corruption—break through the darkness, and illuminate the path of the Secretary, from the very moment he came into office. Should I treat of them all, the 4th of March would find me here, and the chronicles of the defaulters still unfinished.

The first case treated of is that of a Col. S——, Receiver of public moneys in Indiana. The report of the whole case

will be found in Document 142 of the second session of the 24th Congress. After extracting the portions in point, the speech proceeds :—

And what think you was done with this defaulter by the moral, upright, sin-hating Secretary? And what has been done by the President, who thinks this offence ought to be made felony, and punished with the penitentiary? Before I answer this question, I will read you a letter from a then Senator of the United States, which will perhaps throw some light upon the subject. It will be perceived this letter was written during the examination of the office by Mr. West, and was doubtless intended to obviate the effect of his report:

MADISON, *August* 3, 1836.

SIR:—I am informed that some things are stated recently to the prejudice of Colonel S——, receiver at Fort Wayne, *and I am requested to write you.* In doing so, I can only say that I have been gratified in learning that his deposits have been made to your satisfaction; and, if so, I hope that minor matters, if mere irregularities, will be overlooked. He is reputed to be an honest and honorable man, and I do not believe that he has intentionally either done wrong, or violated his instructions. *It would to some extent produce excitement if he were removed, for he has many warm and influential friends both at Fort Wayne and in Dearborn county, from which he removed to his present residence. Better let it be.* With much respect,

WILLIAM H——.

Hon. Secretary of the Treasury.

"With much respect," ha! I doubt it. The honorable Senator could not have had much respect for the honorable Secretary, or he would never have dared to write such a letter. Those two last sentences, like a lady's postscript, contain the whole substance: "It would produce excitement," forsooth, to remove the defaulter; "he has influential friends." "*Better let it be.*" Sir, in these few words you may behold the morality, the policy, and the strength of the party in power. Like the flash language of the London swells, they open, to those who understand the true meaning, the whole secret of political roguery. Being interpreted, the honorable Mr. H——'s letter would read: "Dear Mr. Secretary: I am told Colonel S—— is a defaulter, and you

are going to turn him out. You're a fool; you must do no such thing: it would injure the party to turn him out; he's a strong politician, and has got a great deal of influence; he isn't cheating us, it's only the people. If you know on which side your bread is buttered, keep him in office."

And what says the honest Secretary to all this? Listen; here is his answer:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *September* 7, 1836.

SIR:—Your letter of the 31st ultimo is received, and I am happy to inform you that Mr. S——'s explanations have been such that he will probably continue in office.

Which, being interpreted, reads:

"Dear Billy:—Who's a fool? I never intended to turn him out. I only talked about it to gull the people, and make them think I was honest. He shall be retained."

Ay, and he was retained; and soon rendered such good service to his master as well approved the sagacity which refused to part with him. He has been continued in office by the President, and is now Receiver at Fort Wayne.

There is one more circumstance developed by this document, to which I invite attention. The Secretary, in a letter of the 23d of May to Col. S——, tells him, "that any neglect or inattention to these requirements [that is, to deposit monthly the money on hand, and make monthly returns thereof], unless satisfactorily accounted for, will require of me, from a sense of official duty, that you be reported to the President, with a recommendation that you be removed from office."

Now, in connection with this extract read the following letter from Col. S., written just upon the eve of the Presidential election, and about six weeks after the correspondence between H—— and the Secretary:—

RECEIVER'S OFFICE, FORT WAYNE, *Oct.* 27, 1836.

SIR:—This is to inform you that I have forwarded to the deposit bank one hundred and four thousand dollars, in silver, there to remain *until I arrive with the gold and paper money.*

My democratic friends think I ought not to leave until after we hold our election for President, on the 7th November, which I have concluded to await, and shall leave on that evening, or the next morning, to deposit, with all the

funds on hand up to that time. I shall write you again before I leave. The sales are rapid; mostly paid in gold and silver. My quarterly report will be forwarded by next mail, for last quarter, which ought to have been done sooner, only for want of help in the office. Hereafter, I think I can get my reports off without much delay, after the close of the month and quarter.

What think you of this? The repeated injunction of the Secretary had been, that at the end of each month he should deposit the public money in hand; and if he failed to do so, *without good excuse*, he should be removed from office. Well, sir, he fails to make his deposit in October, not by accident or necessity, but voluntarily; and sends, in advance, his excuse to the Secretary. What is that excuse? It is, that his *democratic friends thought he ought not to leave until after the election for President;* in other words, that his duty to *the party* was paramount to his official duty; that his obligations to Mr. Van Buren (the candidate for the Presidency) were greater than his obligations to the country, in whose service he was at least nominally employed. Accordingly, he neglected his most important duties for many days, that he might use in the election that political influence of which the honorable Mr. H—— speaks with so much unction. The Secretary receives this excuse; recognizes its sufficiency, by not recommending his removal from office, as he had promised to do, in case the reason should not be satisfactory; and has thus convicted himself of entertaining and practising the profligate doctrine that interference in elections by an office-holder is not only justifiable, but involves a higher degree of obligation than the mere performance of official duty. It was not merely to exercise his elective franchise as a citizen that Col. S—— violated the injunctions of the Department; this right he could have exercised where his duty called him, as well as at Fort Wayne. But that would not do; he had influence at the latter place, which it was important to the party he should exercise. Having thus violated his solemn official obligations, for the purpose of assisting the candidate of his party into the Presidential chair, it was of course no more than fair that the President should return the favor. He did return it. He continued Col. S—— in office; and thus, at the same time, exhibited his gratitude, violated his

duty, and prostituted his high station. This, Mr. Chairman, is but a specimen of that corrupt reciprocity of service which constitutes the ligature that binds together, like the Siamese twins, the Executive and the office-holders.

Sir, the document from which I have made the foregoing extracts is a public record, and was furnished to the Senate at the time when the Chief Magistrate was President of that body. Of course, he cannot plead ignorance of its contents. Yet, in the face of the report of West, by which it appears that the receiver had turned his office into a "shaving-shop" for himself and friends; in the face of the profligate letter of H——; of the shameless avowal of the receiver himself that he neglected the paramount duties of his office for the purpose of exercising his influence at the election: in face of all this, the President neglects and refuses to apply the power of removal; and the unblushing partisan still remains in office, ready, doubtless, at the next election, to play again the game which proved so profitable at the last.

I will not longer detain the committee with this disgraceful case, but leaving it and the parties concerned to the judgment of the country, proceed to the consideration of another. I will take the case of H——, receiver of the land office at Columbus, in my own State. In this instance I expect to convict the Secretary of the Treasury, not of a single isolated neglect of duty, but of a continued, daily, miserable winking and connivance at malversation and defalcation during a period of two years, implicating alike his honesty, his veracity, and his capacity. First, however, I will show what importance the Treasury Department attached to the duty incumbent upon collectors and receivers, of depositing in bank, at stated periods, the public moneys in their hands; because it was from the continued violation of this duty that the defalcation in the case of H——, as well as in most others, occurred; and because it will leave the Secretary no excuse, from the supposed insignificance of the duty, for the gross and culpable negligence on his own part which makes him, in justice and truth, a *particeps criminis* in the whole affair.

I hold in my hand a book of some four hundred pages, entitled "Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting copies of letters to collectors and receivers who have failed to comply with the laws and regulations for their government; and, also, copies of reports of examinations of land offices since 1st January, 1834," &c. It is Document 297, and was furnished the House by the Secretary on the 30th of March, 1838. It is the most extraordinary publication that ever fell under my observation. It is a moral, political, and literary curiosity. If you are a laughing philosopher, you will find in it ample food for mirth; if you belong to the other school, you cannot but weep at the folly and imbecility which it exhibits. The Secretary must have been frightened when he compiled it, for it is without form, and darkness rests upon its face. It contains two hundred and sixty letters to defaulting collectors and receivers; in some instances, from ten to twenty to the same defaulter; yet, so curiously is the book constructed, that you must read the whole of it to trace a single case. Its contents are as strange as the "hell broth" that boiled and bubbled in the witches' cauldron. From this fragment of chaos I shall proceed to extract and arrange such matter as is material to my purpose; and first, to show, as I proposed, what importance the Secretary attached to the duty of depositing the public moneys in bank, at stated periods, so that they might not accumulate in the hands of the collector, and thus afford temptation to defalcation.

He then proceeds to cite numerous extracts from letters of the Secretary to receivers in different parts of the country. The following are specimens:—

February 28, 1835, in a circular to some fifteen receivers, the Secretary writes:

> I cannot omit the occasion to impress upon you the necessity of a strict attention to, and punctual compliance with, the duties required of you in regard to the *prompt deposit of the public money*, and transmission of your returns; and to say to you that the performance of those duties must be regarded *as paramount to all others in your official station.*

Again, July 30, 1835, the Secretary writes to the receiver at Helena:

The regular deposit of the whole of the public moneys, as prescribed by the regulations of the Treasury, and the punctual transmission of your accounts and monthly returns, *are paramount official duties.*

I give these extracts from the letters and circulars of the Secretary, to show that the periodical deposit of the public money was a *paramount duty* of the collectors and receivers. If, then, I show that the Secretary neglected to enforce the performance or punish the neglect of this *paramount* duty, it may be fairly inferred that he is either unwilling or incompetent to enforce, in his subordinates, the performance of any duty whatever.

I come now to the case of H——, which I will present in the shape of fourteen letters from the Secretary; and a rarer specimen of official correspondence cannot be easily found.

The correspondence commences January, 1834. I will quote only the present Secretary's epistles; and beg you to remark how well he enforces the performance of *paramount duties.* His first letter follows:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *February* 6, 1835.

SIR:—I regret that there should be occasion for again calling your attention to the omission to render your monthly duplicate returns to this office for the months of November and December (those being in arrear), and to remind you that punctuality in this respect is indispensable.

This refers to the previous defaults, and shows that the Secretary was cognizant of them. The next month he writes again:

March 17, 1835.

SIR:—Having received no monthly duplicate return of the transactions of your office since that for the month of October last, it becomes my unpleasant duty to call your immediate attention to the omission. Allow me to express a hope that there may be no further occasion to remind you of the importance of punctuality in the transmission of these returns.

Here, it seems, H—— was in arrear for four returns; in other words, had violated four *paramount duties.*

But the Secretary is a man of long-suffering; so he writes again, and with some severity. He is determined to be trifled with no longer. Hear him:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *June* 25, 1835.

SIR:—Having, in a communication addressed to you on the 17th of March last, and on several prior occasions, urged upon you the indispensable necessity of a strict attention of making your monthly returns, and finding that no returns have been received from you since that for the month of November last, it becomes my unpleasant duty to say to you, that if those in arrear are not transmitted by return of mail, I shall be constrained to report your neglect for the action of the Executive.

I think, if Mr. H—— don't make his returns now, he's in a desperate case; the Secretary is in earnest. Here is another letter. Let us see:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *August* 28, 1835.

SIR:—Agreeably to the intimation given you in my letter of the 20th June, it has become my disagreeable duty to report your continued neglect to the President, who has instructed me to say to you, that if the monthly returns required from you by the regulations of the Treasury, which are in arrears, are not received at the Department on or before the 10th of October next, you will then be dismissed from office.

There, sir, I told you so; if Mr. H—— don't make his returns by the 10th of October, he will be dismissed; the President himself has said it, and General Jackson is a man of his word.

In the mean time, however, the Secretary gives him another hint:

September 22, 1835.

SIR:—Allow me to inquire why it is that your deposits are not made in the branch of the Planters' Bank at Columbus, instead of the parent bank at Natchez? Does the branch refuse to receive them, and credit the amount at the mother bank?

P. S. Your return for the month of February last has been received to-day, and shows a large amount on hand not deposited; and you are hereby required, if not already done, to deposit any balance still on hand in the above branch, to the credit of the Treasury, and forward receipts therefor, in order to save time and expense in travelling to Natchez.

Before the fatal 10th of October, the kind-hearted man writes still again, that he may give the victim one more warning before the day of grace is past:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *September* 28, 1835.

SIR:—I regret to say that the reasons assigned in your letter of the 14th instant for withholding your monthly returns cannot hereafter be deemed satisfactory. I

can perceive no sufficient cause for their being delayed longer than the first week in each succeeding month, as there can be no difficulty in ascertaining at once the amount of money received within the month, or in stating the amount of your disbursements and deposits during the month. This is all that is required in them. The object of these returns is to afford the Department the earliest information in regard to the money operations of the land office, and the punctual transmission of all the moneys received to the bank of deposit. They are, therefore, of paramount importance, and cannot be permitted to await the completion of detailed book entries, or the perfection of other business, be its character what it may.

And now, sir, I am sorry to say this contumacious receiver paid no attention to these kind warnings and friendly solicitations. He did not make his returns; the 10th of October is past, and Mr. H—— is doubtless removed; for General Jackson and the Secretary have both said it. But, softly; here is a letter dated the 12th of October; no doubt it is the letter of dismissal. Let's read it:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *October* 12, 1835.

SIR:—Trusting to the assurances given in your letter of the 14th ultimo, and to those of your friends* made in your behalf, the President has consented, upon the facts now before him, to continue you in office until the 12th of November proximo; then, unless your monthly returns are all rendered, and satisfactory evidence that

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* Many of the early and constant friends of the Administration in this State have heard, with much regret and sorrow, that the present receiver of public moneys at this place is to "consider himself dismissed unless his returns are made before the first of October." I have long had the honor of an intimate acquaintance with Gen. H——, and I can freely assure your Excellency that a more honorable man does not live.

Poindexter employed a vile, unprincipled agent to take testimony at this office, under a resolution of the Senate; and he endeavored to implicate Gen. H—— in some transactions of very *minor* importance. If I had been examined, I could have explained the whole matter to the entire exoneration of Gen. H——. The fact is, it was a miserable attempt of Poindexter to strengthen his party here. Nothing would rejoice him more than the expulsion of Gen. H——, whom he knows to be one of the main pillars of the democratic cause, and one of the earliest and most distinguished friends of the Administration in Mississippi. His family and connections are extremely influential, and all of them are co-operating with us in the arduous struggle which we are now making. They are true democrats, and the bank, nullifying, and White parties would shout "victory" at any blow aimed at them. We are now in the midst of an electioneering campaign. Gov. Runnels, R. Walker, Maj. Edwards, and myself, constitute the democratic Van Buren ticket. It will be a close contest. Nine-tenths of our newspapers are for WHITE; and every bank in the State, including the United States branch, has taken commission in his

the whole of the public moneys with which you are chargeable are deposited [is received], you must be removed from office, however painful both to him and this Department.

Well, this is strange! a reprieve? and based upon Mr. H——'s letter of the 14th ultimo? Why, the Secretary says in his last that the reasons given in this letter of the 14th ultimo, for withholding the returns, are unsatisfactory; that he can perceive no sufficient cause for their being delayed.

I wish he would explain why he and the President violated their pledge in this case. I confess I don't understand it. I thought if H—— did not make his returns, he would certainly be removed. But if he does not make all his returns and deposits by the 12th of November, he will positively have to go, "however painful" to both the President and the Department. Lest he should forget all about the matter, the Secretary in a few days writes again:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *October* 26, 1835.

SIR:—I have to observe, in reply to your letter of the 9th instant, that the allowance authorized by the regulations of the Department, as a compensation for travelling expenses, and risk in the transmission of the public moneys to the bank of deposit, can only be made when such expenses and risk have actually been incurred, and not in any case where both are avoided by means of the facilities afforded by the mail or deposit banks; moreover, inasmuch as the branch bank of Columbus receives and credits the moneys received by you in the first instance, I can perceive no reason why each deposit in past months should not have embraced the whole amount in your possession at the time of such deposit, as the instructions require.

Sir, the 12th of November arrived and passed; and yet H—— had failed to deposit the public moneys with which he was chargeable, according to the requisition of the Secretary's letter. Of course he was dismissed without further hesitation, you exclaim. Not so fast; don't be rash in your conclusions. I have become suspicious about the matter since the reprieve. I don't believe, now, he was removed at all.

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service. Some three or four thousand of our votes are recent emigrants from other States, and reside in the new counties, knowing nothing of our arrangements; and as we have no mails circulating among them, the result as to them is doubtful.—*Extract from a letter of J. F. H. C——, to Gen. Andrew Jackson, President of the U. S., dated Columbus (Miss.), September* 15, 1835.

And, sure enough, he was not. Here is the very next letter from the Department, talking to him as mildly as if he had never offended:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *November* 28, 1835.

SIR:—Your letter of the 11th instant, and return for the month of October, is received. As your deposits of public moneys are made at Columbus, no reason whatever can be seen why the whole money in your hands at the end of the month is not deposited. It is expected that it will be hereafter.

Very true; no reason can be seen why he should not have deposited the money, and no reason can be seen why he was not removed for failing so long and so repeatedly to do it. But to the correspondence:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *March* 28, 1836.

SIR:—Your letter of the 13th instant, inclosing your return for the month of November, is received. Again it becomes my unpleasant duty to complain of your neglect in this respect, and to inform you that the omission to transmit the required monthly statements, for a whole quarter after they are due, cannot be permitted in any public officer; and especially after having been heretofore so often reminded of the consequences of such neglect. On the return of the mail, therefore, if the usual statements for the other months in arrear are not received, I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of again submitting the subject to the President, for his immediate action.

Why, Mr. Secretary, you are crawling out at the same place you crept in. This is the tune you played at the commencement. It is rather too late in the day to think of frightening H—— now, by threatening to turn him out, when he and everybody else know you never intend to do it.

Mr. Chairman, let me crave your patience. We are nearly through this case, and then we will rest for a moment. The following letter begins to exhibit the catastrophe:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *June* 6, 1836.

SIR:—Your letter of the 28d ultimo, accompanied by your returns for the month of April, is received. Seeing the balance of public moneys in your hands amounted to $128,884 70 at the end of that month, I have to request that you will explain why it was that the whole of the public moneys in your hands on the last of the previous month was not deposited, instead of a part, in conformity to explicit and frequent instructions on that point. It is painful to be obliged to ask you so often for explanations.

Yes, I should suppose it must have been painful.

The Secretary is truly a man of much patience. He must be a lineal descendant of Job. He gives to his subordinates "line upon line," "precept upon precept," "here a little" and there a great deal. He strives hard to teach them honesty.

At length Mr. H—— does what neither the President nor the Secretary dared to do—*he dismisses himself from office;* in other words, *he resigns.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *September* 21, 1836.

SIR:—Your letter of the 27th ultimo, addressed to the President, has been referred to this office. Your duties as receiver will, of course, have ceased, or been suspended, after the 31st ultimo, the time *when you propose your resignation should take effect.* Immediate steps, it is hoped, will be taken to adjust your accounts and pay over the balance. Soon as the President returns, another communication will be made to you.

He resigns, a defaulter for $100,000. He had quite a moderate appetite, compared with Swartwout, and some others.

There is but one more morsel of this correspondence on record, and it is of a piece with the balance. It consists of regret on the part of the Secretary that legal steps had been taken "to attempt to secure" what was due the Government.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *November* 19, 1836.

SIR:—I have received your letter of the 1st instant, by the mail of this morning, and regret to inform you that, as long ago as August last, steps were taken by the Solicitor of the Treasury to attempt to secure the balance due from you.

Now, will any one dare to deny that the President and Secretary were literally guilty of this defalcation? Did it not result from their willful neglect of duty—from absolute and unqualified connivance? For two years and a half this receiver was never for a single instant out of default; he was during that whole period in continued violation of the acknowledged "*paramount duties of his office.*" The Secretary was aware of the whole of it. The case at length becomes so ripe, that it falls of itself—a good round golden apple of the value of $100,000 and upwards. And yet the Secretary swears that no such fruit grows in his garden.

But let us again take a birdseye view of this correspondence.

Let us group it; without giving the exact language, we will take the meaning—the idea.

Letter 1st. Mr. H., I am sorry to tell you again, you haven't made your returns.

2d. Mr. H., you haven't made your returns.

3d. Mr. H., if you don't make your returns, I'll tell the President.

4th. Mr. H., you had better settle up; if you don't, out you go.

5th. Mr. H., please to tell me why you haven't settled; do, that's a good man.

6th. Mr. H., now don't behave so.

7th. Mr. H., how would you feel if you were dismissed from office? Better pay up, or you'll know.

8th. Mr. H., it's lucky for you you've got strong friends; that's the reason we don't turn you out. But you'd better mind your eye.

9th. Mr. H., ain't you ashamed?

10th. Mr. H., perhaps you don't know it, but you are very much behindhand. Do you intend to pay up or not? I wish you would. 'Tis very strange you will hurt my feelings so, and the President's too.

11th. Mr. H., how comes it that you are a defaulter for $128,884 70? I don't wish to hurt your feelings, but I should like to know. I have a curiosity on the subject; can't you tell me?

12th. Mr. H., *you're resigned, have you?* Well, that beats anything. What a cunning dog you are! Feathered your nest well, ha? I'll tell the President all about it when he comes home. How he will laugh!

13th. Dear Mr. H., I regret to tell you that the rascally Solicitor of the Treasury is a-going to try and recover back that money you've got, which belongs to the government. Never mind; we'll fix it some way.

Such is an epitome of the correspondence of the Secretary of the Treasury, and constitutional adviser of the President. What a rich specimen of an American statesman!

But to our task. The next defaulter whom I shall mention was B——, the successor of H——, a "follower in the footsteps." In little better than six months after he had been in office, we find the following account of his fidelity. It is extracted from the report of one Garesché, who was sent out by the Secretary to examine the condition of the land offices. It is dated 14th June, 1837. In relation to B——, he says:

The account of the receiver, which I have made out, and transmit herewith, presents against him a balance of $55,965 54. His own account makes it $53,272 73; it is also annexed. His assets, of which I also send you the list, amount to $61,549 98, *rating the land at* $1 25 *only*, but might probably realize double the amount. The man *seems really penitent;* and I am inclined to think, in common with his friends, *that he is honest*, and has been led away from his duty *by the example of his predecessor, and a certain looseness in the code of morality, which here does not move in so limited a circle as it does with us at home.* Another receiver would probably follow in the footsteps of the two. You will not, therefore, be surprised *if I recommend his being retained, in preference to another appointment; for he has his hands full now, and will not feel disposed to speculate any more.* He will have his bond signed by the *same sureties*, and forwarded in a few days to Washington; this speaks favorably. He has, moreover, *pledged his word* that, if retained, he will strictly obey the law, *and receive nothing but specie in payment for lands.* He tells me that he is about selling a great portion of his lands; that, and some other negotiation, will enable him to discharge a large portion of his debt to the United States before the expiration of the present quarter. Lenity towards him, therefore, might stimulate him to exertions, which severity might perhaps paralyze. I have, in the mean time, *enjoined the closing of the land office until the bond is completed and returned. No land has been sold since the 29th ultimo*

Sir, who, but a profligate pander, could have written the above? Who, but a political bawd, could have received it without indignation and contempt?

"*You will not be surprised* if I recommend his being retained;" "*for he has his hands full now.*"

The licentious familiarity of this, as well as other of the reports and letters to the Secretary, cannot fail of arousing, in the breast of every pure-minded man, sentiments of scorn and disgust.

But, says this polypus feeler of the Secretary of the Treasury, "the man *seems really penitent;* and I am inclined to think, in common with his friends, *that he is honest*, and has been led

away from his duty by the example of his predecessor, *and a certain looseness in the code of morality, which here does not move in so limited a circle as it does with us at home.*" Now, sir, a more infamous slander was never promulgated against an intelligent and moral community; for a more upright, intelligent, and moral community cannot be found in the Republic than that which is the subject of this vile libel. Why, sir, I do not believe there is a citizen of that community who would not spurn, with honest and indignant scorn, the profligate sentiments of this self-constituted "*censor morum.*"

No, sir; it was that looseness of political morality which marks the party in power, which more especially illustrates the official conduct of the Secretary of the Treasury, that induced B—— to embezzle the public property.

And he did it with a vengeance. His accounts exhibit his defalcation as of some $50,000 or $60,000 in money. But it was a more splendid robbery than this: it was of some 28,000 acres of the public domain, which, by virtue of his office, he transferred to himself without even paying for it a single dollar.

Sir, this was a bold operation; most of the appropriators of other people's property prefer personal chattels—something which can be concealed, and, if necessary, taken across the waters. But "there be *land rats* as well as water rats;" and B——, it seems, was a land rat. What a huge slice he cut from the public loaf!—28,000 acres of land! Why, it is more than a German principality. The Norman robber, when he divided out the broad lands of merry England, gave not to his haughty barons such wide extent of wood and field. Who would not be the feudatory of this Administration, when the tenure is so easy, and the reward would constitute the materials for a dukedom?

Sir, the Secretary deserves impeachment for this case alone. Why has he not proceeded to set aside the illegal and false titles to these lands? The receiver never had a shadow of right to them. Yet his pretended title has been recognized, and portions of the land are now being sold by the officers of the government as the property of the delinquent.

After this extensive land-piracy, what does the Secretary do?

Does he, with virtuous indignation, turn him out of office? No, sir. He permits him to resign at his leisure. Two months after Garesché's report, he writes him as follows:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *August* 8, 1837.

SIR:—I am happy to hear of the frank and honorable course proposed in your letter of the 24th ultimo. It would be convenient to have the bond and resignation arrive here by the early part of September.

Yes, sir; according to the morality of the Secretary, resigning, after robbing the government of 20,000 or 30,000 acres of land, is very "*frank and honorable.*"

Having cited one more case—that of Wm. L——, a receiver in Illinois—Mr. P. proceeds:—

But the Secretary says he was not bound to notice these defalcations; that it was impossible for him to scent them out. After, reading the foregoing letters and extracts—"elegant extracts" they may be called—I am inclined to think the Secretary has taken his cue in this matter from the following fable, which, if my friend from Virginia (Mr. WISE) will do me the favor to read, he will afford a moment's relief both to the House and myself. [Here Mr. Wise read, with much humor, from a paper handed him by Mr. P.]

"And how did it happen, Pat, that *Misther Van B*—— always kept in with the ould gineral, as he did?"

"Why, I'm thinking, Murphy, it was because he had *such a bad could, jist!*"

"And what had his having a *could* to do with the matter at all, at all?"

"Why, did you never hear, Murphy, my boy, of the fox that had a could? Then I'll tell ye. Once there was a lion that wanted to know how polite all the bastes were. So he made a great smell in his den with brimstone, or something else—I don't mind what jist—but it smelt enough to knock you down intirely; and then he called in the bear, and says he, 'Good morning, Mr. *Bear*, and what d'ye think of the smell here this morning?' and says the bear, says he, 'Why, it smells *bad*.' 'What's that you say?' says the lion; 'take that,' says he (ating him up altogether!) 'take that, and see if it will tache ye politeness, ye unmannerly son of a cub!' Now, when the bear was ate up, the lion called in the *monkey*, and asked him the same question precisely. Now, the monkey seeing the bear that the lion had swallowed lying dead in the corner, says he, 'May it please your majesty' (says he), 'it's jist the most delightful smell I ever smelt in my life, at all, at all.' 'So it

is,' said the lion (patting him on the head, aisy like, so as to bate the breath clane out of his body), 'so it is' (said he), 'and now you'll not tell another lie soon, I'm thinking.'

"Now, when the lion had kil't the bear and the monkey, he called in the *fox* to him, and, says he (looking very savage, and ready to ate him up, if he should make the laste *fox paw* at all), 'Good morning, *Fox*,' says he, 'how does my parlor smell to-day?' And says the fox (wiping his nose with the brush of his tail, and pulling down his eye-lid with his paw, as much as to say, 'D'ye see any green there, my honey?') 'Faith,' says he, 'may it please your majesty, I've *a very bad could* this morning, and it's me that can't smell at all, at all.' So the lion laughed, and tould the fox he was a very clever baste, and that *he might tread in his footsteps if he could straddle wide enough*, and that all the other bastes should mind him, or he would ate them up as he had done the bear."

Mr. *P.* resumed. The Secretary, though in other respects he resembles a much larger and less cunning animal, yet, in this matter, has certainly taken a lesson from the fox. "*He's had a very bad could*," *and* "*couldn't smell at all, at all.*" No, sir; the stench of corruption, which has been so long steaming up from his Department, has not, it seems, yet offended his olfactories. Besides all this, his friends excuse him by saying that the government will, probably, not ultimately lose anything by these defalcations; that the money will be recovered back, either from the defaulters or their sureties.

Sir, if a thief is detected, and compelled to disgorge the subject of his larceny, does it relieve the rogue and his accomplice from guilt? Does it extinguish the crime? Upon the answer to this question depends the validity of the Secretary's excuse. It is also urged in his favor, that defalcations have occurred under other administrations; that the public money has been stolen before. This plea I feel compelled to allow to its whole extent. "Brave men lived before Agamemnon." In justice to the Secretary, I cannot deny that *his pets* are not the first thieves on record; and I give him joy of the able defence which his friends have extracted from this remarkable circumstance.

And now, Mr. Chairman, what do you think of this Secretary of the Treasury? of his epistolary talent? of his capacity and fitness for the station he occupies? He resembles much, both in manner and morality, that worthy old lady who lived at "The Mug," in Bulwer's "Paul Clifford," and rejoiced in the name of

"Mrs. Margery Lobkins," more familiarly called "Peggy Lob." His correspondence with his subalterns cannot fail of calling to your recollection the exquisite admonitions of honest "Peggy" to "Leetle Paul." Thus moralized, not the Secretary, but the kind-hearted dame:

> Mind thy kittychism, child, and reverence old age. Never *steal!—'specially when any one be in the way.* Be modest, Paul, and stick to your sitivation in life. Read your Bible and *talk like a pious 'un.* People goes by your WORDS more than your ACTIONS. If you wants what is not your own, try and do without it; and, if you cannot do without it, take it away by *insinivation*, not *bluster. They as swindles* does more and risks less *than they as robs.*

Yes, sir; "people goes more by your *words* than by your *actions.*" Well has the President studied this maxim, and cunningly did he practise upon it when he recommended that defalcation should be made a penitentiary offence. Peggy Lob placed in leetle Paul's hand the sum of five halfpence and one farthing. "There, boy," quoth she, and she stroked his head fondly when she spoke (just as the Secretary caresses his subordinates), "you does right not to play for nothing, it's a loss of time! But play with those as be less than yourself, *and then you can go for to beat 'em* if they says you go for to cheat." Ay, and it has not been long since this was the doctrine of those in power; and "*to go for to beat those who say you go for to cheat*" became the watchword of the party. I recollect well, and my honorable friend who sits near me (Mr. WISE) recollects still better than I do, those days of terror, when he had to legislate, as he told us the other day, with "harness on;" when the best argument was the pistol, and the only law was club-law. It was the time when "Hurrah for Jackson" constituted the "Open Sesame" of power, which gained at once admittance into the robber's cave, and participation in the plunder. Then General Jackson had but to whistle, and

> "Instant from copse and heath arose
> Bonnets, and spears, and bended bows."

His followers, like those of Roderick Dhu, started up in every direction, ready and eager to perform his bidding. He had but to point his finger, and his fierce bloodhounds buried their

muzzles in the unfortunate victim of his wrath. Then was the saturnalia of the office-holders; and, like the locusts of Egypt, they plagued the land. Few dared to whisper of corruptions or defalcations; and a bold man was he who proposed to investigate them, for it was sure to bring down upon his head the rage which never relented, and the anger which nothing but furious persecution could assuage.

There was one man, however, who blenched not before General Jackson's frown, and who dared to propose an investigation into frauds and corruptions which had become so palpable and gross as to be an offence in the nostrils of the community. He occupied, at that time, a seat in the other end of this building, as Senator from my own State; a State upon whose laws and institutions his talents and genius are indelibly impressed. The political history of Mississippi is illustrated by his name, from its commencement. He served her in all her departments; and as legislator, judge, and Governor, advanced her prosperity, and added to her character. What he was as Senator you all know. He stood proudly among the proud, and lofty among the loftiest, at a time when the Senate Chamber contained the garnered talent of the country; when its intellectual giants shook the whole nation with their mighty strife. * * The floor of that body was his proper arena. To a correctness of judgment, which would have given him reputation even without the capacity of expression, he joined a power of debate which, for parliamentary strength and effect, was unsurpassed. To all this was added a stern, unyielding attachment to his political principles, and an indomitable boldness in expressing and sustaining them.

Do you not recollect, sir, when General Jackson, like Charles I., strode to the legislative chamber, and thrust among the Senators a despotic edict, more insulting than if he had cast at their feet a naked sword? It was that fierce message which commenced with breaking down the independence and character of the Senate, and finally resulted in that worse than felon act, the desecration of its records. But the mandate passed not unopposed or unrebuked. When it burst, like a wild beast from his

lair, upon the astonished body whose degradation it contemplated, and in the end accomplished, most of the distinguished Senators were absent; but he of whom I speak was at his post. Single-handed, and alone, like Cocles at the head of the bridge, he held at bay the Executive squadrons, and for a whole day drove back the Mamelukes of power; till at the sound of his voice, as at the sound of a trumpet, his gallant compeers, the champions of freedom, the knights—not of the black lines, but of the Constitution—came flocking to the rescue. Sir, it was a noble scene, and worthy of the best times of the Roman republic. A Senator of the United States, in bold and manly pride, trampling under foot Executive insult, and protecting at the same time the honor of his country and the dignity of his high station. There was a moral chivalry about it, far above the heroism of the field. Even now, the contemplation of it makes the blood thrill through the veins, and flush the forehead to the very temples. I need not tell you that man's name was George Poindexter; a name that will long and honorably live among the lovers of independence and the haters of tyranny. But he dared to propose an investigation into the frauds and corruptions of the Government, and from that moment his doom was sealed. The deep, turbid, and resistless current of Jacksonism swept him from the State in whose service the best of his life had been expended; and, ostracized from her councils, he became an exile in other lands.

Sir, the office-holders in this country form an oligarchy too powerful to be resisted. Why was not S—— removed? Why was not H—— ? Why not L—— and B—— ? I will tell you. The Administration did not dare to remove them, even had it wished to do so; like pachas, they had become too powerful for the Sultan, and would not have hesitated in twisting the bowstring round the neck of the messenger who presented it.

Since the avowal of that unprincipled and barbarian motto, that "*to the victors belong the spoils*," office, which was intended for the use and benefit of the people, has become but the plunder of party. Patronage is waved like a huge magnet over the land, and demagogues, like iron filings, attracted by a law of

their nature, gather and cluster around its poles. Never yet lived the demagogue who would not take office. The whole frame of our government, the whole institutions of the country, are thus prostituted to the uses of party. I express my candid opinion, when I aver that I do not believe a single office of importance within the control of the Executive has, for the last five years, been filled with any other view, or upon any other consideration, than that of party effect; and if good appointments have in any instances been made, and benefit accrued to the country, it has been an accidental, and not a voluntary result. Office is conferred as the reward of partisan service; and what is the consequence? Why, the office-holders are not content with the pitiful salaries which afford only small compensation for present labors, but do not, in their estimation, constitute any adequate reward for their previous political services. This reward, they persuade themselves, it is perfectly right to retain from whatever passes through their hands. Being taught that all moneys in their possession belong not to the people, but to the party, it requires but small exertion of casuistry to bring them to the conclusion that they have a right to retain what they may conceive to be the value of their political services; just as a lawyer holds back his commissions. The Administration countenances all this; winks at it as long as possible; and when public exposure is inevitable, generally gives the bloated plunderer full warning and time to escape with his spoils.

Do you not see the eagerness with which even Governors, Senators and Representatives in Congress, grasp at the most trivial appointments—the most insignificant emoluments? Well do these sons of the horse-leech know that there is more blood in the body than what mantles in the cheek, and more profit in an office than is exhibited by the salary.

Sir, I have given you but two or three cases of defalcations; would time permit, I could give you a hundred. Like the fair Sultana of the oriental legends, I could go on for a thousand and one nights; and even as in those Eastern stories, so in the chronicles of the office-holders, the tale would ever be of heaps

of gold, massive ingots, uncounted riches. Why, sir, Aladdin's lamp was nothing to it. They seem to possess the identical cap of Fortunatus; some wish for $50,000, some for $100,000, some for a million; and behold, it lies in glittering heaps before them. Not even

> "The gorgeous East, with richest hand,
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold"

in such lavish abundance as does this Administration upon its followers. Pizarro held not forth more dazzling lures to his robber band, when he led them to the conquest of the Children of the Sun. * * * These defalcations teach another lesson, and one well worth the cost, if we will but profit by its admonitions. They teach that the Sub-Treasury system is but the hot-bed of temptation and crime. They teach that the public treasure cannot be safely confided to individual custody. Sir, this Government may determine to watch, like Turks, with jealous care, its golden harem; but it will seek in vain for the financial eunuchs who have the power to guard without the wish to enjoy.

Mr. Chairman, the amount of money we have lost, great as it is, presents a question of but little comparative importance. If this whole Administration would take passage in the Great Western, and, with the Treasury in their pockets, follow after Swartwout and Price, I doubt not the country would cry "quits," and think it a happy riddance. But it is a deep and vital question, how such things are to be prevented in future; how this running sore is to be healed; how this system of negligence and corruption is to be stopped, and the action of the Government brought back to its original purity.

Give us the right sort of committee—one that will go through the Departments as Van Tromp swept through the British channel, with a broom at the mast-head; and something, perhaps, may be done. But, for my own part, I look for no permanent good except in a change of rulers.

This Administration was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity: it has not belied its parentage. It is essentially and

radically corrupt. In the language of an English historian, describing the reign of the eighth Henry, "it has attained as near to *perfect depravity* as the infirmities of human nature would permit." Just before an election it will talk of reform, and deprecate, with holy horror, the consequences of its own misdeeds; but, no sooner is the object accomplished, than it returns to its policy like a dog to his vomit. I have no hope of reform in the party in power: my only hope is, that the people, convinced of their hypocrisy and wickedness, will hurl them from the high places they have so long disgraced. That a consummation so devoutly to be wished for may be obtained, let us unite in exhibiting to the country their true principles; let us fasten upon them the responsibility of their actions. In this patriotic work I trust I shall find with me my honorable friend from South Carolina, who sits near me (Mr. Pickens). Often has he led the fierce assault against these very corruptions. "Has his hand waxed weak or his heart waxed cold," that his war-cry has not yet tingled in our ears? Surely the "horn of Roland" will sound again; surely in this, his favorite battle, he will strike one more blow for Christendom before he renounces the cross and assumes the turban. Sir, I see by his flashing eye his soul is with us; the spirit of the past is rising before him; he recollects that many moons have not yet waxed and waned, since this very party, who now claim him as an ally, crouched and howled like an exorcised demon beneath the magic of his burning words. Let him come out from among them—he and his friends—for they are not of them: eagles mate not with kites and carrion crows. Sir, I should rejoice to see the gallant gentleman resume his original position. I should be proud to win my spurs under so well-approved and accomplished a leader.

Let me call to his mind a fable, with which he is doubtless familiar: A gaunt and ravenous wolf, hastily gorging the spoils of some plundering expedition, was choked by a bone, and lay at the point of death. A stork happened to be passing that way, and, moved by an ill-juged pity, extended her long neck down the wolf's throat, and extracted the bone. Upon modestly suggesting the propriety of some reward for so generous an act, the

stork was told, with a wolfish scowl, that she ought to consider herself fortunate that her head was not bitten off during the operation.

Now, I take it that it requires no name written beneath this picture, to enable the most obtuse to recognize, in the ravenous wolf, the present party in power. The picture will also call to mind how this party, some years ago, while gorging, with wolfish appetite, upon the "spoils," got a bone in its throat, and lay at the point of dissolution. I leave it to the sagacity of the gentleman from South Carolina to finish the resemblance; to say who acted towards the Administration the part of the benevolent stork; and to reflect upon the boon she is likely to receive for her kindness.

Sir, the immense peculations of Swartwout, Price, and others, or rather the exposure of them, has alarmed the Administration. They propose to make up the losses by retrenchment. And what do you suppose are to be the subjects of this new and sudden economy? What branches of the public service are to be lopped off on account of the licentious rapacity of the office-holders? I feel too indignant to tell you. Look into the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, and you will find out. Well, sir, what are they? Pensions, harbors, and light-houses. Yes, sir, these are recommended as proper subjects for retrenchment. First of all, the scarred veterans of the Revolution are to be deprived of a portion of the scanty pittance doled out to them by the cold charity of the country. How many of them will you have to send forth as beggars upon the very soil which they wrenched from the hand of tyranny, to make up the amount of even one of these splendid robberies? How many harbors will it take—those improvements dedicated no less to humanity than to interest; those nests of commerce, to which the canvas-winged birds of the ocean flock for safety? How many light-houses will it take? How many of those "bright eyes of the ocean," as my friend from Virginia beautifully calls them, are to be put out? How many of those faithful sentinels who stand along our rocky coast, and, peering far out in the darkness, give timely warning to the hardy mariner where the lee-shore

threatens—how many of these, I ask, are to be discharged from their humane service? Why, the proposition is almost impious. I should as soon wish to put out the stars of heaven.

Sir, my blood boils at the cold-blooded atrocity with which this Administration proposes thus to sacrifice the very family jewels of the country, to pay for the consequences of its own profligacy. If they wish to retrench, let them cut down salaries, instead of light-houses; let them abandon offices, instead of harbors; let them turn out upon the world some of their wide-mouthed partisans, instead of the soldiers of the Revolution.

Mr. Chairman, I have done; I had intended to notice other portions of the message, but shall defer it; for I have already too far taxed the patience of the committee. I shall vote in the House for an investigation, though I do not expect much from it. My hope is in an investigation by a higher authority than this House—by the people. The evil of the times lies not in particular cases, but in the principles of the party. Legislation cannot reach it. It is a radical evil, and the people alone can cure it. That they will do so, and in the only way it can be done, *by a change of rulers*, I have a high and holy confidence. This Administration has eaten like a cancer so far into the institutions of the country, that, unless the remedy be soon applied, it will be too late. I do most conscientiously believe, that if the present dynasty is continued in power, constitutional liberty cannot survive. Already our institutions are half corrupted. Already anarchy and despotism are leagued together against the constitution and the laws. Let him who doubts it look at the proceedings in a neighboring State, and the conduct of the Federal Executive in relation thereto.

Let the present Executive be re-elected; let him continue to be guided by the counsels of Mephistophiles and Asmodeus, the two familiars who are ever at his elbow—those lords, the one of *letters* and the one of *lies*—and it will not be long that this mighty hall will echo to the voice of an American representative. This Capitol will have no other uses than to attract the curiosity of the passing traveller, who, in melancholy idleness, will stop

to inscribe upon one of these massive pillars, "Here was a Republic!"

This was his only set speech during the session. But he made several off-hand. The following graphic sketch of one of them has been kindly furnished by the Rev. John L. Blake, D. D., of Orange, N. J.

On the 21st of February, 1839, in the Lower House of Congress, there was a tremendous excitement, and the sitting was continued till one or two o'clock the next morning, when an adjournment took place; but the subject was to be resumed at the hour of meeting on the 22d. The opinion was prevalent that it would lead to bloodshed, perhaps in the midst of the debate, as threats of violence had been freely uttered during the previous evening. The leading persons in the debate were Dr. Duncan of Ohio, Wise of Virginia, Prentiss of Mississippi, Stanley of North Carolina, Menifee of Kentucky, a member from Georgia, and several others whose names I did not know or have forgotten. The House was crowded, of course, at an early hour on the 22d, but by effort, in taking an early start, I got a good seat in the *front* of the gallery, with your brother about five feet in advance of me and before me on the floor of the Chamber. The debate was opened at the usual hour, but with a scattering of oil on the surface, so that the threatening aspects of the day previous did not manifest themselves, and at noon the subject was laid on the table. The only speakers I heard on it (I mean that morning), were Wise, Menifee, Prentiss, Stanley, and Duncan, and there was nothing very remarkable in either. The whole was a kind of pacification. However, as soon as that was laid on the table, a resolution was offered, or called up, respecting some unofficer-like conduct in the Navy. After a brief pause, Prentiss took the floor, and made one of the most beautiful speeches on the Navy—its character and utility—I ever heard. He could not have had five minutes for premeditation; and then he was fresh from the excitement of another subject, which had foreboded personal violence—though it is proper to say, that *he*

was not the one that invited violence, and bid defiance to it. After his eulogy on the Navy, he threw himself on the accused in a kind of indignation paroxysm. He characterized him as having sacrificed the national escutcheon to his own love of lucre; as impelled by a low-bred, degraded instinct, instead of a pure, hallowed principle of patriotism. His diction was easy and chaste; his gesticulation was natural and powerful; and in withering sarcasm, the English language could by no imaginable analysis or combination furnish what was superior. On briefly scanning the facts in the case, there was connected with each one a biting commentary and a succession of overwhelming epithets, falling in uninterrupted rapidity from his lips like an immense volume of water over a precipitous cataract. When witnessing, for the first time, the thunders of Niagara, and the mist rising in clouds from the deep abyss, we have stood, and we have seen others stand, in amazement at the sublimity of the scene. It seems to me it was much so on that occasion in the Hall of Congress. The members, as well as those in the gallery, for a moment appeared unable to speak, or move, or even to breathe, save in half-suppressed pulsations. The man in epaulets looked like a statue, and it is not for me to say, whether the flitting blushes on his cheek, sometimes paler than lilac and sometimes dark as oriental purple, blending and commingling in every possible shade and hue, denoted conscious guilt or remorseless shame. It devolved not on me to be his accuser or his judge; nor do I know how it ended, as on the following day I left Washington. I thought Mr. Prentiss the most naturally gifted orator I had ever heard. The impression he made upon my mind on that occasion is now as fresh as it was a few hours afterwards, and it will never be effaced from my memory.

Here follow a few more specimens of his letters from Washington:

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

Washington City, *January* 31, 1839.

My Dearest Sister:—

I have been a very bad boy in neglecting you so long; but if you'll forgive me this time, I won't do so any more.

I was very near coming home, when I was at New York, and had to sacrifice my inclinations very much in not doing so. It would have been so delightful to spend even a single day with you. But my public duty compelled me to return to Washington. I have been quite busy the last two or three days in writing out the speech I delivered on the 27th and 28th of December. I had neglected it so long that I should not have written it at all but for the strong solicitations of my political friends, who are kind enough to believe it will do some good. It will be published next week in the *Intelligencer*, and also in pamphlets. I shall send you some copies as soon as it is out. I am so lazy, and feel so indifferent about politics now, that I do not think I shall make another set speech during the session; indeed, I am not sure that I shall stay the session out. I am so very anxious to get back to my business in Mississippi, that it is quite probable I shall leave by the middle of February. I am very glad to hear that Abby's health was so much improved by her visit to New York, and that she is in such good spirits; and I need not say how alarmed and grieved I am at your continued indisposition. I am going to become your physician myself, and I'll tell you what my prescription is: you must spend next fall and winter in Mississippi. Judge Guion and his wife will probably visit Portland in the summer; if so, you must return with them to Vicksburg. If they do not visit the North, I will come on after you myself. I think it will cure you entirely. Mrs. Guion is very anxious for you to come, and you will, I doubt not, find a winter in the South both pleasant and useful.

Now, you can talk over this plan as soon as you please with mother and Abby, and let me know whether you make mouths at my medicine or are you willing to take it. In the meantime you must try and get as well as possible, so as to be able to stand the fatigue of the journey. I have no news for you. The weather is unpleasant; Congress is dull, and I have a bad cold. These are the most important items of information which I can furnish you. I have not heard from you for a fortnight. My love and best wishes are with you all.

Your affectionate brother.

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

WASHINGTON CITY, *Feb.* 5, 1839.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I have made inquiry in relation to your passport, and find you will have to apply for it in person. You obtain it from the Secretary of State. You can either come on now and get it, or wait till just before you leave. I shall get some letters from Mr. Clay and others for you.

We have nothing new here; and I am becoming extremely anxious to leave for Vicksburg. I think I shall go before the end of the session; perhaps the last of next week or the first of week after. Upon this, however, I have not positively determined. I overcame my laziness last week sufficiently to write out my speech upon the Defalcations. It came out in the *Intelligencer* yesterday morning, and I have it also printing in pamphlet form for home consumption. It is not a very argumentative speech; indeed, the subject-matter did not well admit of it. Still there is, I think, truth enough in the picture to show a very depraved state of political morals in the country, and almost to make one doubt of the permanency of a Government which can be so badly administered. The speech, of course, does not contain one-half of what I said; I wrote it more for use than show; and made it short and spicy, to attract the popular taste. Wise's speech is too long and documentary—few will read it through; you can, therefore, be as free as you please of your criticisms, for you see I have a plenty of excuses for any defects you may discover in it. I will send you some copies as soon as it is out.

I wrote to Anna a few days since, in relation to her spending next winter at the South. If Judge Guion and wife do not come North, I will come for her myself; so the thing is all settled, except her consent.

I have not received an answer yet. Write me often, for your letters gratify me much.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

WASHINGTON CITY, *Feb.* 10, 1839.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I received, last night, your pretty little scolding letter, and was pleased to see in its sauciness and spirit indications of an improvement in your health. I like your nice long letters very much, and deem it particularly fortunate that I am not the only specimen of garrulity and (pardon me, I quote from your own letter) "*impudence*" in the family. However, when I get you out at that quiet, well-behaved place called Vicksburg, no doubt you will improve very much in this respect.

I am extremely sorry that I cannot come home before going South, but it will be impossible. I have important business in Mississippi which requires my attention, even now, and I think I shall have to start before the end of the session.

There is nothing new here, except a somewhat pleasant change in the weather. By-the-by, I have not yet sent you my speech; but expect it from the printer to-day, and will send you a package. You may try your skill at criticism upon it, if you please; come, I dare you.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *March* 3, 1839.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I seize a moment, in the midst of the confusion, which now reigns triumphant in this Babel Hall, to drop you a line and a kind salutation, before turning my face towards my Southern home. I leave this evening, *via* Baltimore, Wheeling, &c. I shall not be able to visit New York, having stayed here two weeks longer than I intended.

I have been very busy lately, as you will have seen by the papers. Among other things, I undertook the very unprofitable task of purifying the House of a great blackguard, by the name of ———. I did not succeed; but I think a lesson was given, which such fellows will not soon forget. It was quite an amusing scene throughout.

My speech on the Defalcations has been very well received by

the public, and had some high compliments. Some parts of it I do not much approve myself; but they were thrown in for the people, whose taste, you know, must be consulted as well as one's own. I stood by Maine in the debate, which we have had in relation to the troubles there; though I did not, and do not, apprehend any great danger of war.

You must not fail to write me often, and good, *long, nice* letters; and so must Abby. Farewell, I am called away. My love to you all.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

No one could read the whole of Mr Prentiss correspondence from Washington without feeling that, however his talents and principles may have qualified him, he yet had no heart for public life. He was neither ambitious of its honors nor disposed to undergo its proper labors; while he loathed the selfish and tricksy ways which the mere party politician is wont to travel.

But the tone of this correspondence is to be explained, in part, by the state of his private affairs, which neglect, the heavy expenses incident to two elections, and other causes, had thrown into great embarrassment. The fact that he was thought to be very rich, and was known also to be utterly careless of money, was not likely to blunt the edge of Washington temptations. To a young man of wealth, of generous, unsuspecting disposition and excitable temperament, those temptations are too apt to prove fatal. How many have fallen victims to them! To how many a one has going to Congress been like the case of the hapless insect that flies straight into the spider's web! On reaching Washington, Mr. Prentiss became at once an object of interest, and most flattering attentions, to some of the first and best men in the nation; but his society was also warmly courted by persons of another description—by men given to

play and convivial excess. It would be an injury to the claims of truth not to state frankly that he fell more or less into the associations of the latter class. Particulars might be given ; but they would not enhance the clearness or force of the truth, that no man can violate safely the laws of prudence and moral order. Whatever may be his excuses ; however free may be his motives from the baser passions of avarice and mere selfish appetite, still retribution is sure, sooner or later, to overtake his transgressions. It would be wrong not to bear witness that there was no exception in the present instance. The "wild oats," sown during a few years of pecuniary prosperity, brought forth, in due time, a rich harvest of thorny cares, debts and mortifications.

In a previous chapter, allusion was made to the prevalence of gambling in the Southwest twenty-five or thirty years ago. In what might be called the initiatory and milder forms, it was a wide-spread social custom—forming oftentimes a sequel to the fashionable dinner, or an accompaniment of the evening party. The game of cards was closely allied to the side-board and the wine-cup. In its more express and malign forms, the evil haunted steamboat saloons, bar-rooms, and the public house—not to speak now of the places and persons specially devoted to its service. It is a vice of easy growth in a new country, where female influence is scarcely organized, and where the population is largely composed of young men, who associate chiefly with each other, have many idle hours upon their hands, and no home in which to spend them. In such a community there is a social void and a craving for mental stimulus, which too often seek relief in the game of chance. It is a most seductive vice, and seems often to possess a singular fascination even for men of intellect and culture. The authentic annals of gambling and its consequences among the higher classes of English and Continental society during the last hundred years, would

afford one of the most instructive, as well as one of the saddest, chapters in the history of human nature. Nor would a similar narrative respecting our own country be less admonitory. It is a lamentable fact, that some of our most distinguished public men have, at some period of their lives, been addicted to this insane practice. How often have pecuniary ruin, dishonor, intemperance, misanthropy, and a sea of other troubles, followed in its track! Its effects always are and must be dreadful. It is, to use the words of Holy Writ respecting the tongue, *an unruly evil, full of deadly poison—and is set on fire of hell.* Nobody can even occasionally indulge in it, and that for the mere excitement, without paying a severe penalty. The present is a case in point. Several of Mr. Prentiss' intimate friends—men of highest standing in society, and whose influence over him was not small—unfortunately were no strangers to the hazards of the table. Probably with them, too, the attraction was chiefly mental, and not pecuniary. Such was, unquestionably the case with him. Many anecdotes might be related illustrating the fact, and proving in the clearest manner, that motives wholly alien from that of gain, beguiled him into this practice. To cite the testimony of one who knew him long: "As I understand it, he *never* played as others do. In short, it was not a habit; not a daily, nor a weekly, but an occasional thing—a sort of wild impulse, the more irrepressible from its infrequency and suddenness. No one, who has ever felt the passion without the sordid avarice, which games of chance create, can call it anything but an intellectual *fascination.*"

The following is the substance of another testimony—that of a gentleman of great worth, and among Mr. P.'s truest as well as his most intimate friends in the Southwest:

I carefully studied his character in reference to this point,

making inquiries of others as I had opportunity; for it always struck me with wonder that a man of his great intellect and superior moral qualities should ever have fallen into such a practice. I am perfectly satisfied that it was only an occasional thing, not a habit. I speak confidently, for, as I have said, I closely scrutinized the matter. It is clear to me, that the evil grew out of a highly excitable, morbid temperament, acted upon by social stimulus and the pressure of associates not always of the wisest stamp. Indeed, it is not to be denied that Mr. P. was extremely unfortunate in *some* of the men with whom, from a variety of causes, he was thrown into intimate relations and companionship. It was his weakness—though owing in part also to his good nature—that he could not readily say "no" to this class of his acquaintances.

The fact here alluded to, that he was not always fortunate in the character of his associates, furnishes a key to much that was faulty in his life. Some, who affected to be his friends, were in truth his worst enemies. After he became rich, especially, such false friends swarmed about him, gained his confidence, searched out the weak points of his character—his pride of will and morbid craving for excitement—played upon his artless, unsuspecting temper, and generous self-oblivion, ministered diligently to his love of mirth—and then did what they could to despoil him of his money, or which pleased some of them still better, to draw him down to their own level.

The design of the foregoing remarks has been to explain, not to palliate. The narrative itself, as we proceed, will supply a further clue to the case, by shedding new light upon the character of its subject.

The disgust, with which Mr. Prentiss sometimes referred to his Congressional life, was doubtless owing, in no small degree, to the causes just mentioned. The brilliant success which marked his entrance upon the national arena, never

effaced the painful associations connected with it. He then had such an experience, both of his own moral weakness, and of the greedy selfishness, depravity and meanness of others, as cast a dark shadow over many coming years.

But there was a bright side also to his recollections of Washington. Some of his warmest and noblest friendships were there formed. When, in a genial mood, he delighted to relate anecdotes of the great men of the nation, of both parties, to describe their characters, and say what he thought of their political opinions or of their oratory. The portraits he would sometimes draw of Clay, Webster, White, Crittenden, Preston and other of his political friends whom he admired and honored, were very spirited. He once gave me a charming description of John Quincy Adams, and of the almost boyish eagerness with which the members would gather around him whenever that "old man eloquent" rose to speak. His portraitures of this kind indicated a rare faculty for observing and individualizing character.

CHAPTER XV.

Reminiscences of Mr. Prentiss by Henry A. Wise.

This seems to be an appropriate place for the following reminiscences, furnished by the Hon. Henry A. Wise, of Virginia, one of Mr. Prentiss' colleagues in Congress, and since United States Minister to Brazil. They relate chiefly to the period embraced in the four preceding chapters, and supply many incidents not contained in them. They also touch upon some points already mentioned; but not at all in the way of bare repetition. Such an effusion of true-hearted friendship is too rare a gem to be broken; and I feel sure every reader will thank me for giving it just as it is, entire and undivided.

RICHMOND, VA., *Feb.* 21, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR:—

This moment brought me yours of the 19th inst., and I pause not to give you some reminiscences of your lamented brother, my friend S. S. PRENTISS, as they rise and revive him and the past to my mind's eye. Oh! that I could depict him as he really in heart was, far above his own lofty genius, and further still above his external self, as he appeared to the world. A deep interest, indeed, I do take in his memory. I shall give you the simple truth of the impressions he made upon me—impressions as strong as ever were made upon me by any man—but without reference, particularly, to dates or chronological order of events. Most of the scenes I went through with him must remain unwritten; but I can safely say, that not one was bare

of incidents, rich and rare—not one was stained by grossness, or soiled with shame. He was a study to me from the beginning to the end of our intimacy. That intimacy is still cherished as one of the precious pearls which I was so fortunate as to find on the desert-strand of life. I loved him, I honored him, I mourn him.

The first I knew of him was in the Mississippi contested election. When Congress met, he and Word, his colleague, had not arrived. A caucus of the party to which I then belonged, was called in respect to what should be done with that contest. I remember the debate well. The plan of proceedings was discussed and settled upon; when some one proposed that, on the arrival of the two new members, Messrs. Word and Prentiss, they should be taken somewhat in pupilage, and be put in training for their parts; that some able and experienced members should be selected to procure for them the precedents, prepare arguments, and aid them before the Committee and the House. At this suggestion, Wm. C. Dawson, now Senator from Georgia, rose and said: "Oh! gentlemen, you need be at no such pains; you will have no babes to nurse. One of those men is a host in himself, who can take care of Mississippi and rather help us to boot, than require our pap-spoons. He is not only full-grown, though low in stature and very lame in gait, but a giant, who is a head and shoulders taller than any man I know, here or elsewhere, for the task of prompting and defending himself. We need not say *Up-a-diddy* to him." Well, thought I, he must be something more than I am accustomed to among men, to deserve this extravagant boast of him. We'll see, when this giant-dwarf comes, whether a little aid won't help him, like other men.

Soon afterwards he came. I saw him; that was enough to show me that he was a singularly marked man. His eye was deep in his head—large, clear, full of animation and of hidden fires. It had a look deeper than its set; when looked *into*, it returned a glance, which, like that of Lara, "dared you to forget." But there was a buoyancy in his presence, which seemed as if it would leap from battle to play, from play to battle; and a *goodness*, which said to me at least, "Let's you and I be friends!"

Spirit responded to spirit at the first sight without a word. I thought of this our instant liking for each other—though we were both prepared for it—when I afterwards heard Daniel Webster tell the anecdote of a transcendental sudden love between two German strangers: "Sir, a sudden passion seizes me!" But between your brother, and myself it was true and approved by time and trial. His head, I saw, was two stories high, with a large attic on top, above which was his bump of comparison and veneration. Of the latter he had a vast deal. He actually admired, and reverenced often, gifts and genius far inferior to his own. My habits were not like his, and at first we were not thrown much with each other in social contact. He was, at that time, excessively convivial. The moment he arrived, a set of roisterers challenged him at once to a continued round of revelry, and I said to myself and others: "This Mississippi wonder will cease, if he does not take heed!" Word, his colleague, was a modest and amiable, and very sensible man, who without reserve acknowledged his superiority. When I spoke to Word about the need of study and preparation on PRENTISS' part for the approaching debate, his eye twinkled with mirth. "Let him alone! Never do you mind! Wait and hear him!" That was all the return I got for my apprehension. Well; I did wait to see; it was all that I was allowed to do. The day at length arrived. PRENTISS' turn came. He threw himself on the arena at a single bound, but not in the least like a harlequin. He stepped, no stranger, on the boards of high debate—he "raised the eye to heaven and trod with giant steps." Never did I see the "gaudia certaminis" so beam and shine and glow from mortal face. I never shall forget the feelings he inspired, and the triumph he won. But there's the speech, or at least a fragment of it, surviving him. There's the figure of the *star* and the *stripe;* go read it—read it now that his eye is dim and his muscles cease to move the action to the word; then imagine what it was as his tongue spoke it, his eye looked it, his hand gesticulated its thoughts!

He at once, after this first effort, ascended to his pinnacle of place in the House of Representatives. The contested election

was sent back to the people. On the eve of their departing for Mississippi, the Whigs gave a public dinner to Prentiss and Word. It was as elite an assembly as I ever saw gathered in the Metropolis. The Hon. Hugh L. White, the Cato of the country, presided; and Clay was there, and Webster, and their peers from both houses of Congress, and the most select of visitors and the populace. Prentiss, that night, was reserved both in sentiment and style. He assumed that he was yet to "win his spurs," and would not dare, or deign to talk of deeds, until he had returned from the crusade of the canvass, a knight of the Holy War for popular and State Rights against the worse than Turk of party.

But that night of speeches I shall never forget, because it sealed my intimacy with your brother. Many members spoke when toasted, and many toasted to draw out speeches. Clay utterly failed to charm the assembly; his wings seemed to be wet, and they flapped and floundered in the dust. Webster rose, and yawned, and gaped a bad apology for not trying to entertain us. After awhile he was called on again, and he responded to the call by punning on the names of senators from Mississippi. That State, he said, had sent a *Walker*, then a *Trotter*, and next she was likely to go off in a *Gallop*-ing consumption. He sipped his toast and down he sat again to the disappointment of everybody. The scene was dull, it began to grow late, and Judge White called me to his place of presiding and retired. Two or three score guests remained until past twelve, and at about one o'clock some one—Gen. Waddy Thompson, of S. C., I think—rose and said that the speeches of the occasion had been execrable, that no one had tried to touch a chord of feeling, or to draw a cork even of wit. He upbraided Webster, especially, with failing to attempt to speak with effect; and, as a Southern man, appealed to him, Webster, a Northern man, to touch the theme of the Union. Clapping of hands commenced; Webster! Webster! The Union! The Union! Webster! The Union! He rose and commenced in strains of solemn earnestness. As he went on, he warmed; he grew taller; his large ox-eyes expanded; his complexion grew darker; his

heavy arm and hand worked like a tilt-hammer of Vulcan, beating out thoughts for the gods. He rose to the *Empyrean*, and yet seemed low down to us, because his thoughts were so large that, though high enough, if small, to be out of sight, they compassed us all about with their mighty shadows, and the very clouds of them were luminous with aurora-like light. He brought forty men to their feet, their hands resting on the dining table; their eyes gazing at him, and their lips parted, as if they were panting for breath. By and by he came to point the speech with its moral, and exclaimed: "And you, Southern brethren! shall *my* children be aliens to *your* children? shall *your* children be aliens to *my* children?" This he said so touchingly, so appealing to the heart, so generously tendering love and confidence, that—heavens! what a burst of feeling! The great tears rolled down many a manly cheek, and —— ——, of Georgia, exclaimed:—"*There, now! didn't I know it? but my people wouldn't believe this! I'll tell them as soon as I go home!*" In the midst of the excitement, —— ——, of Ky., in a perfect frenzy, seized an empty champagne bottle, and crying out "Reform or Revolution! Liberty or Death!" threw it at Webster's head, which he would, doubtless, have hit but for my jarring his arm by catching at it as he threw. What a magnificent structure he would have destroyed, had he hit it! Thus ended the last act of that night, and your brother went to my room and lodged until morning.

He then, for the first time, gave me his private history. I perceived that his feelings were morbid respecting his lameness. Indeed, he told me that he had gone out alone at the midnight hour, and bewailed in despair the marring of his fair proportions. I begged him to get married, assuring him that he was wholly mistaken in virtuous intelligent women, if he imagined that his lameness forbade the bans of matrimony to him. He was much soothed by this assurance, and promised to seek more the humanizing society of woman, and to try to love. He did so, and I always thought he was drawn to me, by this persuasion, and by my always refusing to join him in his conviviality.

He went back to Mississippi, and went through the contested

election. He made almost preternatural efforts to carry the State. When he returned, he told me many anecdotes of the canvass of exquisite richness; but 1,000 majority and more did not satisfy him. His conception of the virtue of the people was very high, and he expected that they would, in spontaneous outburst of masses, rebuke the outrage, that had been perpetrated upon their right of representation. Party ties had more influence over them than he chose to imagine they would, and he never considered his second return a triumph. He denounced it bitterly as a defeat. In respects like that he was very hard to satisfy, so high was his sense of honor and virtue, and so much did he despise mere expediency as compared with justice and right. "Just to think," said he, "that in one of the towns I owed all my votes to a menagerie." He then gave me the most ludicrous account of his being followed from Dan to Beersheba by a showman, who had an elephant, a Bengal tiger, an ourang-outang, &c., &c. The show pursued him from crowd to crowd, usually a little in his rear, so that just as he would get into the height of his argument, behold the elephant approaching! and away would rush the people; he, PRENTISS, saying:—"Fellow citizens, I always defer in your presence to the Asiatic stranger!" At last, near the end of the canvass, the showman at some town came forward, and complimenting him with thanks for his patient forbearance in never complaining of the interruptions of the Asiatic stranger, tendered the services of himself and retinue in the way of a free exhibition for the benefit of Mr. PRENTISS and his popularity. Overcome by the kindness, he consented, and the showman gave the "ladies and gentlemen," an extra and unparalleled description of his wild beasts—such, I am sure, as can be found in no book of natural history. But this got votes, which no argument or eloquence could have won. His own descriptions of these scenes beat all comedy.

Never, after his return, did he enter regularly upon the enterprise of debate, nor would he deign to drudge on any one of the committees. He thus did himself great injustice, for his *forte* was rapid execution and dispatch of business, while no man could

excel him in the "*fortiter in re*" of debate. His wit was ever flowing, his spirits always high, and the whole ideality of the man, in fact, was too exuberant for the dull didactics of the politician. His very *partyism* was nothing else nor less than pure *patriotism*, and he loathed all tactics or tricks. He never made other than a real issue of right and wrong, to be tried by the moral ordeal alone, and could not be induced to partake in mere partisan warfare. Once I knew him to be awfully severe on Dr. D——, of Ohio, because he took him for a mere party bully. Sometimes he would burst forth in invective, irony, sarcasm, and strains of indignant eloquence, equalling any man who ever spoke. At one time the Treasury reports were very confused and involved, covering up and concealing, in fact, the amount of the public debt. The appropriations were cut short, without sufficient reasons appearing from the state of the public fisc as explained by the Department. Many objects of primary importance failed of supplies. The light-houses, among other objects of expenditure, were stinted in the estimates. Seeing the reason to be a *deficit* in the Treasury, which the administration did not wish to expose, and determining to draw from them the admission of the fact, which they had denied and concealed, I denounced their policy as being inimical to the important objects for which they had failed to recommend adequate appropriations. In respect to the lights along the coasts, I accused them, in figurative language, of meaning "*to put out the eyes of the Ocean.*" The expression seemed to strike PRENTISS' fancy, and it alone, as he told me, inspired him to speak. He rose and made one of his most powerful efforts. I remember his loftiness on that occasion, and I was the more proud of him because he always said that speech was more mine than his, inasmuch as I had "caused the wit." His mode of complimenting was so generous, that it made one yield him the rivalry. He tried to make it seem that he entered the lists but to do homage to a friend—and not to do the same thing, as he undoubtedly did it, surpassingly better.

His goodness of heart was very sound, and very refined, too. One evening he and a friend of his were invited with me to take

a terrapin supper at Col. John McCarty's rooms. We spent the evening jovially, and at a moment when I least expected any manifestation of affection from Prentiss, he came to me, unobserved by the others, took a small stud from my shirt-bosom, an urn in gold enamel (I wonder if it be among his relics), and put in its place a pin of great price, set in diamonds. He demanded the exchange, and said it was for something he had heard and seen —he did not mention what—to be a memorial. I tried to get at his meaning but he would never tell me. I always took it to signify his approval of my advice to bury the morbid sensibility about his lameness, and to brighten his existence by taking a wife. A few evenings before, he had attended a party with me, and I had forced him into the presence of a lady, and introduced him to her, at the moment she was to step into the dance. He got involved in the mazes of the cotillion, was embarrassed by his being in the way, became exceedingly mortified, and retired. I found him that night in "the horrors" from the incident, and shamed him into self-complacency. He always seemed grateful for being made able and willing to cast off that weakness. I am sure that if he had married earlier, he would have been a happier and a more useful man. His morbid feelings in reference to his lameness were, doubtless, at the bottom of no small portion of his occasional recklessness, and apparent disregard of the opinion of others. In talking on this subject, he once said to me: "I delight to climb great heights on the perpendicular sides of rocks, whence the staid fathers of comely daughters will expect me certainly to fall. I sport in shocking their apprehensions, to show them that, like the chamois, I am *sure-footed* at least, and can walk and skip where other men dare not tread without certain destruction."

Soon after this conversation, a scene occurred between us, which I shall never forget. It was at the entrance of a faro-bank. I declined to accompany him, and said: "That is one of your high rocks, and it has no foothold. Remember the fathers, and the comely daughters too, have a right to forbid your walking there; it is a monstrous height of extravagance, from which you even must fall and be crushed, and you have no right to set

such an example." He said he would go alone, went on, and I followed him to the head of the stairs, and stopped him. Looking him true in the face, I said: "You are rich in everything. You have a mother and sisters—are *they* provided for by you?" He turned black in the face, the veins in his temples curdled, I expected he would strike me with his cane. It was the only moment in our acquaintance when I had reason to suppose we would no longer be friends. "Do you take me for a dog?" said he. "Yes," said I, "baser than a dog, if you have the heart to give your abundance to the Cerberi of faro-bank hells instead of giving it to a mother!" He dropped tears, took me by the arm, went in, bet a few moments, and came out with me, completely subdued. He would, ever after that, permit me to chide him like a little child. He, too, had done his part in saving me from sin. Severe conflicts had passed in the House between myself and one of his opponents (Mr. Gholson). I drew a challenge, and offered to put it into the hands of your brother. He declined altogether to take it, unless I would submit implicitly my honor to his discretion. I did so, not imagining his object in obtaining the pledge—a pledge I would not have made but for the conviction that in all such cases it is proper to be exacted of a principal by one called on to act as a second. As soon as he got the pledge, he took the challenge, slept upon it a night, and brought it back to me, saying that he had reflected upon it well, and concluded definitively, that I was neither called upon nor authorized to send a challenge at all in the case; that he had witnessed the whole scene, and I was bound to forbear the call, upon every consideration of necessity, justice, or honor; and that no one could fairly bear it as a second. In case I was challenged he would act, but not otherwise. On another occasion, at my request, he saved a young friend of mine from a duel; and his influence, in such matters, was always potential for peace.

His kindness to a little body-servant, named Burr, who attended him at Washington, used to attract and amuse me. He gave Burr his own selection of wardrobe, and the boy dressed himself like a Merry Andrew—and a plenty of pocket-money, and he

did nothing but play at marbles, whilst his master had to wait on himself. When on a visit at Portland, his native place, in the summer of 1837, he offered Burr his freedom, and tried hard to persuade him to remain North, but the boy would not leave him. While at Portland, he told his master, one day, that a gentleman in black had asked him whether he "wouldn't like to be free?" "Yes," Burr replied, he "liked it very much." "But," said the man in black, "do you think yourself free now?" "If I ain't, what am I?" "Why, wouldn't you like to work, and have all your earnings to yourself?" "No!" "Why?" "Because I don't like to work. I plays, and Mr. Prentiss finds all the money." "What, then, did he say, Burr?" "Why, he said, sir, 'don't doubt you must be a natural fool!' Not so big a fool, though, as he thought."

During my motion for the investigation of the Swartwout affair, Prentiss was most efficient in his aid. His speech, illustrating from *Paul Clifford* the pretensions of certain men in power, is an exquisite piece of ridicule and satire. He could thunder invective like Chatham. For an example, see his speech against Commodore E——. His expressions of denunciation and scornful wrath were terrific; but his pathos was winningly sweet, whilst his bursts of the joyful bounded like elastic balls.

The popular assembly was the place of his proudest exhibitions. To the multitude he was as a trumpet. He said, "Fellow-Citizens!" and, *auribus erectis*, the people stood still, or swayed to and fro, or shouted, or were sad, smiled or frowned, at his magic will. He, Richard H. Menifee, and myself, were specially invited, just after the adjournment of Congress, in the summer of 1838, to address a Mass Meeting at Havre de Grace, Maryland. In steamers crowded, and with flags streaming, we left Baltimore, and reached the stand in the morning. We waited hours and hours, and the cry was, "Still they come!" It was a gathering of the substantial population from far and near—of fathers, sons and daughters—husbands and wives—wealth and wit, and beauty and fashion. A fairer, more respectable, or more patriotic assembly of the people I never witnessed. It was near the middle of July, and the day sultry to

wilting. I was sick and overcome by the heat—so relaxed, in fact, that I could not make a tolerable apology for not attempting a speech. Menifee followed, and was not himself either. PRENTISS was shouted for, and came up—as he always did, nothing affecting *him*—like a courser in perfect keeping. His *physique* was wonderful in that respect; his digestion was good, his body sound, and he could bear every extreme variation of temperature and habit. He was never out of sorts, and at once lighted up this scene. Said he: "Fellow-Citizens—by the Father of Waters at New Orleans I have said Fellow-Citizens—on the banks of the beautiful Ohio I have said Fellow-Citizens—here I say Fellow-Citizens—and a thousand miles beyond this, North, thanks be to God! I can still say, *Fellow*-Citizens!" Thus, in a single sentence, he saluted his audience, drew every man, woman, and child near to him, made himself dear to them, and by a word covered the continent—by a line mapped the United States from the Gulf to the Lakes—by a greeting, warm from the heart, beaming from the countenance, depicted the whole country, its progress, development, grandeur, glory and union! Every hat was whirled in the air, every handkerchief was waving, the welkin rung with hurrahs—the multitude heaved up to the stand, stood on tip-toe, and shouted cheer after cheer, as if wild with joy and mad with excitement. Never, for one moment, did he relax his grasp upon that mass of human passions. He rose higher and higher, went up, and up, and on, and on, and on—far, far away like the flight of the carrier-pigeon! It was the music of sweet sounds, and anon it was the roar of the elements. Figures bubbled up, and poured themselves forth like springs in a gushing fountain, which murmur and leap awhile amid mountain rocks, then run smooth and clear though green and flowery valleys, until at length, swollen into mighty rivers, they roll onward to the ocean! The human reeds bowed and waved before his blasts, or lifted their heads and basked in his sunshine.*

* A correspondent of the N. Y. *Commercial Advertiser*, writing from Havre de Grace, July 11, 1838, gives a glowing account of this barbecue. Here follow a few sentences. Of Mr. Wise he says:—"He was Wise all over. Ardent, spirit-stirring and patriotic, he flashed in upon the dark masses of locofocoism and corruption,

I was not sick when he was done. His clothes were dripping through with perspiration. We sat together in the moonlight the night of that day, on the deck of the ferry-boat, and he talked philosophy and poetry until morning.

Travelling in such a crowd, he was in danger of losing his baggage, and the night at Havre de Grace he could not find his linen to change. Burr was of no service to him, but more troublesome than his trunks. He threatened to leave the boy by dodging him. On the way going up the Delaware, every time Burr missed his master, he would poke into the crowd, touch me, and inquire: "Mr. Wise, do you know where Mr. Prentiss is?" for he always called him Mr. Prentiss. He had no idea of losing his white slave.

Prentiss' style was that of a torrent. There was nothing artificial about him. He was the most natural orator I ever heard open lips. What he knew, that he spoke right on. He did not know that he was moving his hands when he gesticulated; and yet every muscle in his frame seemed to crawl upon his bones as his mighty mind throed to deliver forth his thoughts. It was a glorious boy reciting a lesson which put his mind in a glow. His gestures were not graceful, but the heaving of his breast was actually sublime. There was speaking in his nostril. His eye was a flame of fire. His very hair was the mane of a war-horse. Yet all was perfectly natural.

His facility of mastering an entire book at one glance—a law case by a look—was so great that he had little need to labor; yet he labored, as he told me, more than his most intimate

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exposing them in all their hideousness. He is the man for the times." Of Menifee, he writes:—"What a head this young man wears! In his bosom beats a heart filled with the purest patriotism. He was listened to with rapture." He thus refers to Mr. P.'s address:—"And now all eyes were turned on Prentiss, of Mississippi! Well, I had never heard him, and was charged to the muzzle with expectation. His fine, large head, and spirit-speaking eyes, and mouth formed for eloquence, gave an earnest of what was coming. I do not know how to make you comprehend the powers of this mighty man. He is like a professor of arms—a giant in the midst of his own armory, in which is every weapon of the best materials, and highly polished, for defence and offence. He spoke upwards of one hour and a half. The multitude cheering, amid the rays of a burning sun, and still demanding him to *go on! go on!*"—Ed.

friends supposed. His memory was so quick and retentive that he had rarely to look twice, or to pause upon a page. The Bible and Shakspeare he knew from lid to lid. He had memorized so much that, as he himself said, he knew not, at times, whether he was speaking his own thoughts and figures and language, or those of others. Images of comparison and illustration came so free to him, that his difficulty was in selecting which to use and which to throw away. His chief fault, therefore, was in a waste of figures; his arguments being, sometimes, buried in tropes—and yet the argumentative was really his *forte*. He was, indeed, a miracle in his gifts and in his character. Every trait of his noble nature was in excess; his very virtues leaned to faults, and his faults themselves to virtues. The like of him I never shall see again, so compounded was he of all sorts of contradictions, without a single element in him to disgust—without one characteristic which did not attract and charm. His public exhibitions were all splendid and glorious. He did everything he attempted magnificently well; and yet, as I knew him, he could hardly be called a man of business. He was a natural spendthrift, and yet despised debt and dependence. He was heedless of all consequences, yet of the soundest judgment in council, and discretion in movement. He was almost the only man I ever saw whom I never heard utter a scandal, and he had the least charity of any man I ever saw for all kinds of baseness, or meanness. He was continually without ceasing quoting classic lore, and not the least of a pedant. He was brave to foolhardiness, and wouldn't hurt Uncle Toby's fly.

His domestic affections were truly tender and beautiful. He almost adored his mother. All his knowledge of the Bible, especially, and all the good and grace that was developed in him, he attributed to the teachings at her knee. He was most eloquent when her *morale* was the subject of discourse. May I, my dear sir, inquire, as Joseph inquired of his brethren for his father—is that lady "still alive?" He loved you all with exceeding love and devotion.

He was very refined as a patriot, in never drawing local comparisons. No man must attack nor North nor South where

he was. The one was his birth-place, where his mother dwelt; the other was his foster-place, where he met every generous tender of a home and friends, as devoted as ever cherished worth. He first settled in Cincinnati. I asked him, why he didn't remain there? He liked nothing tame. "No," said he, "there I could not spend a ninepence—everything was too cheap. I was haunted, too, continually by the ghosts of slaughtered swine!" He described his *entrée* into Natchez—"I arrived there with but one five dollar bill in my pocket; I knew it was not a capital to trade upon, and I spent it to purchase confidence with. As soon as I reached the threshold of mine host, the Boniface of the hotel, I ordered a bottle of wine and segars, and called the landlord, as the only guest, to join me. He drank, and I told him who I was, what I wanted, and what I had to expect in the way of pay for my fare beyond what was before us. He looked at my face, said he would trust it, gave me his hand, and without a word more, did trust me for board and lodging until I got a school. I taught school, and cleared ground enough of birchen rods, with which I taught 'the young idea' how to shoot, to entitle me to a preëmption right of public land!"

When he was in Congress, there was a galaxy of talent and genius there. Cushing and Evans, of New England; Corwin, of Ohio; Menifee, of Kentucky; Peyton, of Tennessee, had just gone out, but was fresh in the recollections of all; Legare, of S. Carolina, and a host of not lesser stars; but Prentiss caught the eyes of those who gazed upon the lights of the capitol, as soon as any one that shone there. Then he was thought and he thought himself rich in the good things of this world. His fortunes changed. The last time I saw him was in Washington, in the spring of 1842. We were then divided in politics, he still adhering to the Whigs, I adhering to Mr. Tyler's administration. He seemed sad and more settled. He was then married, but had to make up the leeway of immense losses in money. His heart had obviously been scathed by his disappointments and his disgust at mankind, whom he had before delighted to trust and confide in. But I hope he was a wiser and a better man. He had been taught well to whom to look, but I never was informed whether he

ever called on that all-healing Physician, who alone can cause "*the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see.*" He wrote to me at times, but I don't remember whether I ever preserved his letters. If I did, they are at home in Accomac. Peace to his ashes! Honored be his name!

I sat right down, and have written right on this rough sketch of my impressions. I send it to you unpolished and without revision. Do with it what you please, except destroy it. If it is of no use, send it back to me.

Your friend,

HENRY A. WISE.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Wilkinson Trial—Mr. Prentiss' Address to the Jury.

ÆT. 30. 1839.

On his way home from Washington City, Mr. Prentiss remained a week in Kentucky to assist in the defence of his friend Judge Wilkinson, who, in consequence of an unhappy affray at Louisville, had been indicted for murder. Mr. Thorpe thus refers to the affair* :—

The celebrated Wilkinson trial, although not as remarkable as many others engaged in by Mr. PRENTISS, has obtained a wide-spread notoriety, from the fact that it was reported, and therefore more perfectly brought before the public. The particulars were nearly these: Some time in December, 1838, three gentlemen of the highest social position in Mississippi, and of a professional reputation, stopped at the Galt House, Louisville. One of the party ordered from a fashionable tailor a suit of clothes, which, upon being tried on, was found unsatisfactory by his friends; and upon the expression of this dissatisfaction arose a contest between the Mississippians and the tailor, at which blows were given and received; but the parties separated for the time, without any material personal injury to each other. The tailor, attacked in his own shop, and feeling himself deeply wronged, proceeded to the police court for warrants, but was obliged to go to the Galt House for the

* *American Review*, September, 1851.

names of the offenders. On his way, he told the circumstances of what he conceived to be his unjust treatment to his friends, and soon elicited a strong feeling of sympathy, particularly among that class of persons who, full of generous impulses, are rather thoughtless, and "like a spree."

Whatever might have been the original intention of the tailor and his friends, on going to the Galt House, the result was one of the most fearful of tragedies. * * When the Mississippians, on their way to supper, entered the bar-room, they were recognized, and a general *mêlée* commenced, in which figured the different characters alluded to in Mr. PRENTISS' speech. The Mississippians, although more or less injured, escaped, but not before they had killed two of the friends of the tailor, while he for whom they sacrificed their lives was "cut off" by the crowd, "and the whole occurred so quickly that he had not time to do anything."

The Mississippians were strangers in Louisville; the tailor and the deceased were substantial men, highly respectable in their connections, and in command of money and influence. The dead were remembered for their virtues, and lauded for the devotion they displayed in endeavoring to avenge the presumed wrongs done a friend. The excitement following the fight ran high among the people, and the Mississippians found the jail a necessary defence against the crowd that for a while swayed in tumultuous waves in its vicinity. But the substantial citizens maintained the dignity of the laws, and the Mississippians were peaceably brought before the proper tribunal, recognizances were taken, a change of venue obtained, and in a little over three months after the fatal meeting at the Galt House, the trial was had at Harrodsburg.

The three Mississippians were included in the indictment; consequently the defence rested upon the proof of a conspiracy on the part of the tailor and his friends to kill or degrade the Mississippians, which justified the latter named in defending themselves to the death, and this justification had to be drawn from the witnesses in a mass.

The examination of the witnesses, as reported in the printed

trial, is characteristic of similar proceedings, except that many of the persons concerned in the affray were men of marked habits and original character: they therefore afforded Mr. Prentiss a fine field for his remarkable power of analysis. The consequence is, that the whole trial, under his magic influence, becomes like a perfectly conceived play, having every part sustained; mingling up subdued humor with infinite pathos. The characters seem complete, and perform their parts to the very consummation, as if but plastic heroes in his hands. There is the opening act at the tailor's store; then the preliminary excitement in the streets, the fearful mutterings of revenge, and the comical braggardism of "Bill Holmes" and his confederates; then the thrilling challenges between the principal parties; the appearance of "the three" in the bar-room; the rush—the fight—the death—the trial and the acquittal.

The court-house in which the trial took place was crowded to overflowing, and among the audience were to be seen nearly two hundred ladies, drawn to the scene by the fascinating fame of Mr. Prentiss. His speech throughout was listened to with almost painful interest; and in spite of the place and the circumstances, those that heard would occasionally give utterance to pent-up feelings that refused to be controlled.

The speech was regarded by all who heard it as a masterpiece of forensic eloquence. Mr. Bullock, the prosecuting attorney, thus alludes to it in his summing up: "I have listened with great admiration to the splendid effort made for the defence by one who has risen in this Court for the first time, though distinguished and honored throughout the Union for his unrivalled powers of eloquence." The celebrated Ben. Hardin, a cool-headed veteran advocate, who assisted the Commonwealth's attorney, in the opening of his reply, is no less complimentary; though his praises, it must be confessed, are a little tart. Associated with Mr. P., in the defence, were several of the ablest lawyers in Kentucky; among them, the venerable Judge

Rowan. In the course of his address, the latter again and again recurs to Mr. Prentiss' speech in terms of unbounded admiration. He speaks of "the sunshine lustre shed upon the law and facts of the case by the transcend nt genius" of Mr. P., "with the witchery of whose eloquence and power of argument we have just been delighted, instructed, and convinced." In defending Mississippians against the charge of being "a lordly people, who look down with contempt upon mechanics and the laboring classes of mankind," he says, "they looked down upon Mr. Prentiss, who travelled from the far East, and was engaged in teaching school among them—an obscure pedagogue. No; I cannot say he was *obscure.* He could not be obscure anywhere; the eruptive flashes of his great mind, like those of Etna, threw a blaze of light around him, which attracted, or rather exacted, their gaze and admiration. They sent him as their Representative to the Congress of the United States. Mr. Prentiss must pardon me, for thus going into his private history. I was myself an humble pedagogue. The difference in our condition is, that in my case the people of Kentucky honored *me;* in his, the people of Mississippi honored themselves."

After these notices, the reader will, probably, be disappointed in the printed speech. It is said to be a mere shadow of the original, and can hardly be perused with patience by any one who listened to that. The following extract from a letter of Mr. Browne, the gentleman who published it, will show under what disadvantages the address was reported. The letter is dated at Louisville, several weeks after the trial:—

I send you with this a package containing some letters expressive of the great solicitude which prevails in this city, and throughout Kentucky, to have the splendid speech you made in

Harrodsburgh placed permanently on record. Trusting to the efficacious solicitations of my friends, whose letters I enclose, I shall not add another word on this branch of the subject.

I send you such notes of your speech as I could make; the great difficulty of reporting you, exactly, must always present, for the first time particularly, an obstacle to any reporter. To me it has been embarrassing, in two respects: I have not practised reporting speeches for the last seven years, and in this instance I found it impossible to resist the fascination which spell-bound me from the mechanical operation of my task.

I have endeavored to give you the starting subject of every sentence, so that the same train of thought may recur to you; and I feel sanguine that you will find little difficulty in filling up the blanks, so as to connect the whole properly. The spaces generally leave room for what is necessary to complete the sense with what you can supply. The order is exactly as you spoke. I could have filled many of the spaces with my own condensations of your remarks, but not presuming to use language not exactly yours, I prefer leaving you room enough to supply the beautiful imagery in which you clothe your own thoughts. I sincerely trust these passages have not escaped your recollection. Mr. Murdaugh, or Judge Wilkinson, can remind you of many. Pray let me have all.

In the mere argument to evidence, I have endeavored to save you some trouble by translating my notes more fully than in the ornamental passages.

The printers are at work upon the pamphlet and in a few days will be at a stand for your speech.

Your compliance with my request, and the general request here, will not only confer a lasting obligation upon me, but delight a countless host of your warmest friends and admirers throughout this State. That it will give pleasure all over the Union cannot for a moment be doubted.

A speech, reported in such a way, and after so long an interval of time, could scarcely be expected to retain its proper life and beauty.

The published address is as follows * :—

May it please your Honor, and you Gentlemen of the Jury: I rise to address you with mingled feelings of regret and pleasure.

I regret the occasion which has caused me thus accidentally and unexpectedly to appear before you, and has compelled you to abandon, for a time, the peaceful and quiet avocations of private life, for the purpose of performing the most important and solemn duty which, in the relations of civilized society, devolves upon the citizen.

I regret to behold a valued and cherished friend passing through one of the most terrible ordeals ever invented to try the human feelings, or test the human character; an ordeal through which, I do not doubt, he will pass triumphantly and honorably, without leaving one blot or stain upon the fair fame that has been so long his rightful portion; but through which he cannot pass unscathed in his sensibilities and feelings. The lightning scar will remain upon his heart; and public justice herself cannot, even though by acclamation through your mouths she proclaims his innocence, ever heal the wounds inflicted by this fierce and unrelenting prosecution, urged on, as it has been, by the demons of revenge and avarice.

Most of all, do I regret the public excitement which has prevailed in relation to these defendants; the uncharitable prejudgment which has forestalled the action of law; the inhospitable prejudice aroused against them because they are strangers, and the attempt which has been, and is still making, to mingle with the pure stream of justice, the foul, bitter, and turbid torrent of private vengeance.

But I am also gratified; gratified that the persecution, under which my friends have labored, is about to cease; that their characters, as well as the cause of public justice, will soon be vindicated; that the murky cloud which has enveloped them will be dissipated, and the voice of slander and prejudice sink

* See *Trial of Judge Wilkinson*, &c. Reported by T. Egerton Browne. LOUISVILLE, 1839. It is an uncommonly interesting and instructive pamphlet.

into silence before the clear, stern, truthful response of this solemn tribunal.

The defendants are particularly fortunate in being tried before such a tribunal. The bearing and character of his Honor who presides with so much dignity, give ample assurance that the law will be correctly and impartially laid down; and I trust I may be permitted to remark, that I have never seen a jury in whose hands I would sooner entrust the cause of my clients, while, at the same time, I am satisfied you will do full justice to the Commonwealth.

I came before you an utter stranger, and yet I feel not as a stranger towards you; I have watched during the course of the examination the various emotions which the evidence was so well calculated to arouse in your bosoms, both as men and as Kentuckians; and when I beheld the flush of honorable shame upon your cheeks, the sparkle of indignation in your eyes, or the curl of scorn upon your lips, as the foul conspiracy was developed, I felt that years could not make us better acquainted. I saw upon your faces the mystic sign which constitues the bond of union among honest and honorable men; and I knew that I was about to address those whose feelings would respond to my own. I rejoiced that my clients were, in the fullest sense of the term, to be tried by *a jury of their peers.*

Gentlemen of the jury, this is a case of no ordinary character, and possesses no ordinary interest. Three of the most respectable citizens of the State of Mississippi stand before you, indicted for the crime of murder, the highest offence known to the laws of the land. The crime is charged to have been committed not in your own county, but in the city of Louisville, and there the indictment was found. The defendants, during the past winter, applied to the Legislature for a change of venue, and elected your county as the place at which they would prefer to have the question of their innocence or guilt investigated.

This course, at first blush, may be calculated to raise in your minds some unfavorable impressions. You may naturally inquire why it was taken; why they did not await their trial in the county in which the offence was charged to have been com-

mitted; in fine, why they came here? I feel it my duty, before entering into the merits of this case, to answer these questions, and to obviate such impressions as I have alluded to, which, without explanation, might very naturally exist.

In doing so, it will be necessary to advert briefly to the history of the case.

My clients have come before you for justice. They have fled to you, even as to the horns of the altar, for protection.

It is not unknown to you, that upon the occurrence of the events, the character of which you are about to try, great tumult and excitement prevailed in the city of Louisville. Passion and prejudice poured poison into the public ear. Popular feeling was roused into madness. It was with the utmost difficulty that the strong arm of the constituted authorities wrenched the victims from the hands of an infuriated mob. Even the thick walls of the prison hardly afforded protection to the accused. Crouched and shivering upon the cold floor of their gloomy dungeon, they listened to the footsteps of the gathering crowds; and ever and anon, the winter wind, that played melancholy music through the rusty grates, was drowned by the fierce howling of the human wolves, who prowled and bayed around their place of refuge, thirsting for blood.

Every breeze that swept over the city bore away slander and falsehood upon its wings. Even the public press, though I doubt not unwittingly, joined in the work of injustice. The misrepresentations of the prosecutor and his friends became the public history of the transaction; and from one end of the Union to the other, these defendants were held up to public gaze and public execration as foul, unmanly murderers, and that, too, before any judicial investigation whatever had occurred, or any opportunity been afforded them for saying a single word in their own defence.

I recollect well, when I received the first information of the affair. It was in some respectable newspaper, which professed to give a full account of the transaction, and set forth with horrible minuteness a column of disgusting particulars.

Instantly, openly, and unhesitatingly, I pronounced the para-

graph false, and trampled it under my heels: when rumor seemed to endorse and sustain the assertions of the public prints, I laughed her to scorn. I had known Judge Wilkinson long and well. I knew him to be incapable of the acts attributed to him, or of the crime with which he was charged. Not an instant did I falter or waver in my belief. I hurled back the charge as readily as if it had been made against myself. What! a man whom I had known for years as the very soul of honor and integrity, to be guilty, suddenly and without provocation, of a base and cowardly assassination! One whose whole course of life had been governed and shaped by the highest moral principle; whose feelings were familiar to me; whose breast ever had a window in it for my inspection, and yet had never exhibited a cowardly thought or a dishonorable sentiment; that such a one, and at such an era in his life too, should leap at a single bound the wide gulf which separates vice from virtue, and plunge at once into the depths of crime and infamy! Why, it was too monstrous for credence. It was too gross for credulity itself. Had I believed it, I should have lost all confidence in my kind. I would no longer have trusted myself in society where so slender a barrier divided good from evil. I should have become a man-hater, and Timon-like, gone forth into the desert, that I might rail with freedom against my race. You may judge of my gratification in finding the real state of facts in the case so responsive to my own opinion.

I am told, gentlemen, that during this popular excitement, there were some, whose standing and character might have authorized the expectation of a different course of conduct, who seemed to think it not amiss to exert their talents and influence in aggravating instead of assuaging the violent passions of the multitude. I am told that when the examination took place before the magistrates, every bad passion, every ungenerous prejudice was appealed to. The argument was addressed not to the court, but to the populace.

It was said that the unfortunate individuals who fell in the affray were *mechanics;* while the defendants were *Mississippians, aristocratic slaveholders,* who looked upon a poor man as no

better than a negro. They were called *gentlemen*, in derision and contempt. Every instance of violence which has occurred in Mississippi for years past was brought up and arrayed with malignant pleasure, and these defendants made answerable for all the crimes which, however much to be regretted, are so common in a new and rapidly populating country. It was this course of conduct and this state of feeling which induced the change of venue. I have made these remarks, because I fear that a similar spirit still actuates that portion of this prosecution, which is conducted, not by the State, but by private individuals.

I am not aware that the Commonwealth of Kentucky is incapable of vindicating her violated laws or unwilling to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of crime. The district attorney has given ample proof that she is provided with officers fully capable of asserting her rights and protecting her citizens; and with the exception of one or two remarks, which fell from him inadvertently, I accord to his observations my most unqualified approbation: he has done equal justice to the State and the defendants; he has acquitted himself ably, honorably, and impartially. But, gentlemen, though the State is satisfied, the prosecutor is not. Your laws have spoken through their constituted agent; now private vengeance and vindictive malice will claim to be heard. One of the ablest lawyers of your country, or of any country, has been employed to conduct the *private part* of this prosecution; employed, not by the Commonwealth, but by the real murderer; him whose forehead I intend, before I am done, to brand with the mark of Cain—that in after life all may know and all may shun him. The money of the prosecutor has purchased the talent of the advocate; and the contract is, that *blood* shall be exchanged for *gold*. The learned and distinguished gentleman to whom I allude, and who sits before me, may well excite the apprehension of the most innocent. If rumor speak truth, he has character sufficient, even though without ability, and ability sufficient, even without character, to crush the victims of his purchased wrath.

I said that, with the exception of one or two remarks, I was pleased with the manly and honorable course of the Common-

wealth's attorney. Those remarks seemed to be more in the spirit of his colleague than in accordance with his own feelings.

I was sorry to hear him mention so pointedly, and dwell so long upon the fact, that the defendants were *Mississippians*, as if that constituted an ingredient in their crime or furnished a proof of their guilt. If to be a Mississippian is an offence in my clients, I cannot defend them; I am myself *particeps criminis*. We are all guilty; with malice aforethought, we have left our own beautiful homes, and sought that land, the name of which seems to arouse in the minds of the opposing counsel only images of horror. Truly the learned gentlemen are mistaken in us; we are no cannibals, nor savages. I would that they would visit us, and disabuse their minds of these unkind prejudices. They would find in that far country thousands of their own Kentuckians, who have cast their lot by the monarch stream, in the enjoyment of whose rich gifts, though they forget not, they hardly regret the bright river upon whose banks they strayed in childhood. No State has contributed more of her sons to Mississippi than Kentucky; nor do they suffer by being transplanted to that genial soil. Their native State may well be proud of them, as they ever are of her.

But I do injustice to you and to myself by dwelling upon this matter. Here in the heart of Kentucky my clients have sought and obtained an unprejudiced, impartial jury. You hold in your hands the balance of justice; and I ask and expect that you will not permit the prosecution to cast extraneous and improper weights into the scale, against the lives of the defendants. You constitute the mirror, whose office it is to reflect, in your verdict, the law and the evidence which have been submitted to you. Let no foul breath dim its pure surface, and cause it to render back a broken and distorted image. Through you now flows the stream of public justice; let it not become turbid by the trampling of unholy feet. Let not the learned counsel, who conducts the private part of this prosecution, act the necromancer with you, as he did with the populace in the city of Louisville when he raised a tempest which even his own wizard hand could not have controlled.

Well may he exclaim, in reference to that act, like the foul spirit in Manfred:

> I am the rider of the wind,
> The stirrer of the storm;
> The hurricane I left behind
> Is yet with lightning warm.

Aye, so it is still "with lightning warm." But you, gentlemen, will perform the humane office of a conductor, and convey this electric fluid safely to the earth.

You will excuse these prefatory observations: they are instigated by no doubt of you, but by a sense of duty to the defendants. I wish to obviate, in advance, the attempts which I know will be made to excite against them improper and ungenerous prejudices. You have seen, in the examination of one of the witnesses, Mr. Graham, this very day, a specimen of the kind of feeling which has existed elsewhere, and which I so earnestly deprecate. So enraged was he, because the defendants had obtained an impartial jury, that he wished the whole Legislature in that place not to be mentioned to ears polite, and that he might be the fireman; and all on account of the passage of the law changing the venue. Now, though I doubt much whether this worthy gentleman will be gratified in his benevolent wishes, in relation to the final destiny of the Senate and House of Representatives of this good Commonwealth, yet I cannot but believe that his desires in regard to himself will be accomplished, and his ambitious aspirations fully realized in the ultimate enjoyment of that singular office which he so warmly covets.

Gentlemen of the Jury—I ask for these defendants no sympathy; nor do they wish it. I ask for them only justice—such justice alone as you would demand if you occupied their situation and they yours. They scorn to solicit that from your pity which they challenge from your sense of right. I should ill perform towards them the double duty which I have assumed, both of friend and advocate, did I treat their participation in this unfortunate transaction otherwise than candidly and frankly; did I attempt to avoid responsibility by exciting commise-

ration. I know that sooner than permit deception and concealment in relation to their conduct, they would bare their necks to the loathsome fingers of the hangman; for to them the infamous cord has less of terror than falsehood and self-degradation.

That these defendants took away the lives of the two individuals whose deaths are charged in the indictment, they do not deny. But they assert that they did not so voluntarily or maliciously; that they committed the act from stern and imperative necessity; from the promptings of the common instincts of nature; by virtue of the broad and universal law of self-defence; and they deny that they have violated thereby the ordinances either of God or man. They admit the act and justify it.

The ground of their defence is simple, and I will state it, so that it cannot be misapprehended. They assert, and I shall attempt, from the evidence submitted, to convince you, that a conspiracy was formed by the prosecutor, and various other persons, among whom were the deceased, to inflict personal violence upon them; that the conspirators, by preconcerted agreement, assembled at the Galt House, in the city of Louisville, and attempted to accomplish their object; and that, in the necessary, proper, and legal defence of their lives and persons from such attempt, the defendants caused the deaths of two of the conspirators. After discussing this proposition, I shall submit another, which is, that even though a conspiracy on the part of the deceased and their companions, to inflict personal violence and bodily injury upon the defendants, did not exist, yet the defendants had *reasonable* ground to suppose the existence of such a conspiracy, and to apprehend great bodily harm therefrom; and that upon such reasonable apprehension they were justified in their action, upon the principle of self-defence, equally as if such conspiracy had, in point of fact, existed.

The law applicable to these two propositions is simple, being in fact nothing more than a transcript from the law of nature. The principles governing and regulating the right of self-defence

are substantially the same in the jurisprudence of all countries—at least, all civilized ones. These principles have been read to you from the books, by my learned and excellent friend, Col. Robertson, and require no repetition.

That a man has a right to defend himself from great bodily harm, and to resist a conspiracy to inflict upon him personal violence, if there is reasonable danger, even to the death of the assailant, will not, I presume, be disputed. That *reasonable, well-grounded* apprehension, arising from the actions of others, of immediate violence and injury, is a good and legal excuse for defensive action, proportionate to the apparent impending violence, and sufficient to prevent it, I take to be equally indisputable.

By these plain rules, and upon these simple principles, let us proceed to test the guilt or innocence of the defendants.

First, then, as to the existence of the conspiracy. Before examining the direct evidence to this point, you will naturally inquire, was there any cause for this alleged conspiracy? Motive always precedes action. Was there any motive for it? If we establish the existence of the seed, we shall feel less hesitation in being convinced of the production of the plant. Was there, then, any motive on the part of Mr. Redding and his friends for forming a combination to inflict personal violence upon the defendants? In answering this question, it will be necessary to take notice of the evidence which has been given in relation to events that transpired at the shop of Mr. Redding at a period anterior to the transaction at the Galt House, and which, except for the clue they afford to the motive, and consequently to the subsequent action of the parties, would have no bearing upon the case before you. You will take heed to remember, that whatever of impropriety you may consider as attaching to the conduct of Judge Wilkinson and his friends during this part of the affair, must not be permitted to weigh in your verdict, inasmuch as that conduct is the subject of another indictment which is still pending in this court.

Judge Wilkinson visited Louisville for the purpose of making the preparations necessary for the celebration of his nuptials.

The other two defendants had also their preparations to make, inasmuch as they were to act as the friends upon this interesting occasion. Dr. Wilkinson, a brother of the Judge, had ordered a suit of clothes of Mr. Redding, who follows the very respectable occupation of tailor, occasionally relieved and interspersed by the more agreeable pursuits of a coffee-house keeper. On the day but one preceding that fixed for the marriage ceremonies, the Doctor, in company with his brother and friend, Murdaugh, proceeded to the shop of Mr. Redding for the purpose of obtaining the wedding garments. Upon trying on the coat, it was found ill made and of a most ungraceful fit. It hung loosely about his shoulders, and excited by its awkward construction the criticism and animadversion of his friends. Even the artificer did not presume to defend the work of his own hands; but simply contended that he could re-organize the garment, and compel it, by his amending skill, into fair and just proportions. From the evidence, I presume, no one will doubt that it was a shocking bad coat. Now, though under ordinary circumstances the aptitude of a garment is not a matter of very vital importance in the economy of life, and ought not to become the subject of controversy, yet all will admit that there are occasions upon which a gentleman may pardonably indulge a somewhat fastidious taste in relation to this matter. Doctor Wilkinson will certainly be excused, considering the attitude in which he stood, for desiring a well-made and fashionable coat.

I confess I am not a very good judge in concerns of this sort. I have had no experience on the subject, and my investigations in relation to it have been exceedingly limited. Under favor, however, and with due deference to the better judgment of the learned counsel on the other side, I give it as my decided opinion, that a gentleman who is about to participate in a marriage ceremony is justified in refusing to wear a coat, which, by its loose construction and superabundant material, indicates, as in the case before us, a manifest want of good husbandry.

Suffice it to say, Doctor Wilkinson and his friends did object to the garment, and Mr. Redding, after some altercation, consented to retain it. The pantaloons, which constituted a part

of the suit, had been sent to the Hotel, and the Doctor was in the act of paying for them out of a $100 bill, which he had previously deposited with Mr. R., when the Judge remarked that he had better not pay for the pantaloons until he had first tried them on, as they might be found to fit no better than the coat. Mr. Redding, according to his own evidence, responded, that "they had said too much already about the matter;" to which the Judge, he says, replied, that he did not come there to be insulted, and immediately seized the poker and struck him; upon which the Doctor and Mr. Murdaugh also fell on him, with their knives drawn. Redding then seized his shears, but did not succeed in cabbaging therewith any part of his assailants. He was successful, however, in dragging the Judge into the street, where, after a slight scuffle, which resulted in no personal injury to any of the parties, they were separated. After the separation, Redding offered, if they would lay down their knives, to fight them all. This kind proposition the defendants declined; but the Doctor returned into the shop, obtained his $100 note, and then the defendants retired from the place.

Such, in substance, is Mr. Redding's own account of the transaction at his shop. The witness Weaver also proves the altercation which occurred in relation to the fit of the coat and the scuffle which ensued in consequence. He, however, avers that Redding, in a very insulting manner, told the Judge that he "was more meddlesome than the other," and that he "was too d—d meddlesome," or words to that effect; which insulting language so excited the Judge that he seized the poker and commenced the assault.

The other witness, Craig, Redding's journeyman, testifies in substance the same as Redding, as to what passed in the shop; corroborates his account of the altercation about the coat; and says that he considered Doctor Wilkinson, not as assisting in the affray, but as attempting to separate the parties. Some of the witnesses think that the Doctor attempted, in the street, to stab Redding, as he was getting the advantage of his brother. The evidence on this point, as well as in regard to the conduct of Murdaugh, is somewhat contradictory. In the view, however,

which I have taken of the case, the discrepancy is of little importance.

It is clearly proven, take the evidence in any way, that Mr. Redding used insulting language towards Judge Wilkinson, on account of the Judge's expression of an opinion in relation to the fit of his brother's coat. What was the exact language used, it is difficult to ascertain.

There were six persons in the room when the quarrel ensued —on the one side, the prosecutor (Redding), his foreman (Craig), and the boy (Weaver); on the other, the three defendants.

All the evidence on this point has been derived from the first party, and ought, consequently, to be taken with many grains of allowance. The prosecutor has given you his version of the affair, but his cunning has prevented the defendants from giving you theirs. Doctor Wilkinson, who was discharged by the examining magistrate, has been included in the indictment, one would judge, for the very purpose of precluding his testimony. No one can doubt that the conduct of Judge Wilkinson, however reprehensible, resulted from the abusive language and insulting demeanor of Mr. Redding. The happy facility with which he indulged, on a subsequent occasion, in the use of opprobrious epithets, gives good reason to suppose that his remarks on the present were not very guarded. The expression deposed to by Weaver is, I presume, but a sample. "You are too d—d meddlesome," was the observation, accompanied, no doubt, by the overbearing and bullying manner which illustrated his conduct afterwards, and which smacked more of his spiritual pursuit, as the Ganymede of a coffee-house, than of his gentle calling as a knight of the shears and thimble. He certainly did on this occasion "sink the tailor;" for tailors are proverbially polite and gentlemanly in their deportment.

I do not wish to be considered as justifying Judge Wilkinson or his friends, in taking notice of the petulant and insolent conduct of Redding. I think they would have better consulted their character and feelings, by treating him with contempt. I will go further, and candidly admit that I consider their course reprehensible although it resulted from passion and sudden ex-

citement, and not from deliberate determination. They were themselves convinced of this in a moment, and left the ground, ashamed, as they still are, of their participation in the matter—Judge Wilkinson rebuking and leading away his young and more ardent friend, Murdaugh, who seemed to indicate some disposition to accept the boastful challenge of Mr. Redding, "that he could, if they would lay down their knives, whip them all three." From all the evidence, it is perfectly clear that, in the altercation, no personal injury resulted to any of the parties; that the defendants retired voluntarily from the quarrel; while Mr. Redding retained the field, and with boastful taunts and insulting outcries, invited a renewal of the fight. The Mississippians were manifestly satisfied. Not so Mr. Redding: he was "full of wrath and cabbage," boiling over with violence, and breathing defiance and vengeance against the retreating foe. He, doubtless, retired to his coffee-house, and attempted to soothe his wounded feelings with some of the delightful beverages which it was occasionally his profitable province to dispense to others. Here his friends gathered around him; he recounted to them his manifold grievances; he grew warm in the recital; the two white-handled pocket-knives, which had been drawn but not used in the affray, danced before his distempered imagination in the shape of trenchant and death-dealing blades. These little instruments, of ordinary and general use, became, at once, bowie knives, "in buckram." He believed, no doubt, and made his friends believe, that he was an injured man, and that some satisfaction was due to his insulted honor. I have presented this part of the case to you, simply for the purpose of enabling you to judge of the subsequent action of the parties, and to indicate on which side a desire for vengeance, and a combination to obtain it, were most likely to originate. Upon the conclusion of the first affray, which party would you have suspected of a disposition to renew it? Where could lie the motive on the part of Judge Wilkinson and his friends for additional violence? But who that is acquainted with the workings of human nature, or the indications of human feeling, will hesitate a moment in believing that revenge lurked in the bosom of Redding, and

sought only a safe opportunity for development? His conduct indicated a state of mind precisely fitted for the formation of a conspiracy.

Having laid the foundation, I will now proceed to the erection of the superstructure. I will show, first by the direct, and then by the circumstantial proofs, the existence of this foul and cowardly conspiracy. I will, however, here remark, that I doubt not the misrepresentations and falsehoods of Mr. Redding, in relation to the transaction, induced several of the persons implicated to join the combination, who, with a correct knowledge of the facts, would never have participated in the affair.

First, then, as to the direct and positive evidence. Mr. Jackson says, that immediately after the first affray he was passing Mr. Redding's, when his attention was attracted by loud talking in the store, which induced him to enter, where he found Redding, Johnson, and Meeks. Johnson was expressing his opinion as to the course which should be pursued towards the Mississippians for their conduct, and said they "ought to go to the Galt House and flog them." "Jack," said he to Mr. Redding, "just say the word, and I'll go for Bill Holmes, and we'll give them h—l;" at the same time boasting, in his own peculiar phraseology, "that he was as much manhood as was ever wrapped up in so much hide." Upon some hesitation being evinced at this proposition, Meeks said, "Let's go anyhow, and we'll have a spree."

Mr. Jackson further deposes, that some time after he was stopped by Johnson, on the street, who told him he was going after Holmes; that Jack Redding was a good man, and that he, Jackson, ought to go with them to the Galt House, and see him righted. Jackson declined, alleging as an excuse his religious character, and his desire to abstain from fighting; whereupon Johnson exclaimed, in his ardent zeal for enlisting recruits, that "church, hell, or heaven ought to be laid aside to right a friend." Jackson says, he understood it distinctly that it was a fight to which he was invited.

Mr. Jackson's testimony is entitled to credit. He did not participate in the affair; and he can have no inducement to

speak falsely, for all his prejudices must naturally be enlisted on the side of the prosecution. His character is sustained by unexceptionable testimony, and has been impugned by no one except the Salamander gentleman, whose ambition seems to be, to pursue in the next world that occupation which in this is principally monopolized by the descendants of Ham.

The next direct evidence of the conspiracy is from Mr. Deering, whose character and testimony are both unimpeachable. He says, he was passing down Market street, on the evening of the affray, when he saw, near the Market-house, Johnson, in company with Holmes and others, and that they were discussing the subject of the quarrel between the Mississippians and Redding. This proves that Johnson was carrying into effect his proposition at Redding's store, viz.: "to go and get Bill Holmes, and give them h—l." He had already found Bill Holmes, and, we shall presently see, made all his arrangements for "giving them h—l."

Mr. Deering says, that soon after he met Mr. Johnson again, who inquired for Mr. Turner, the City Marshal. Mr. Deering told him he would be too late with his officers, for the Mississippians would be gone; to which Mr. Johnson responded, "*there were enough gone there—that if they came down their hides would not hold shucks.*" What did this mean, if it did not indicate that the conspiracy had already been formed, and a portion of the conspirators assembled at the Galt House, for the purpose of preventing the game from escaping, and holding it at bay, until the arrival of the rest of the hunters. They had gone, it seems, too, in sufficient numbers to authorize the classical boast of Mr. Johnson, "that if they (meaning the Mississippians) came down their hides wouldn't hold shucks."

There is one more witness, whose testimony is positive to the point. It is Mr. Harris. He swears, clearly and unequivocally, that Johnson met him on the evening of the affray, told him that the Mississippians had insulted Mr. Redding, and directly solicited him to go with Redding's friends to the Galt House and see him righted. Mr. Harris says he refused to go, whereupon Johnson exclaimed, "Are you a friend of Redding's?" thereby showing how strong was the feeling when even a mere refusal

to participate in the violence, was considered as proof that the man refusing was no friend of Redding.

Such, gentlemen, is the positive proof of the conspiracy. It consists of the evidence of three disinterested and honest witnesses, two of whom were directly and strongly solicited to participate in the matter. The testimony of each of these witnesses corroborates that of the other two. The facts sworn to have a natural order and connection. There is a verisimilitude about the whole story, which would not belong to either portion by itself. The testimony is entitled to much more weight than if it had been the recital of a single witness; for if you believe one of the witnesses, you must give credit to all. One of them swears that he heard Johnson, in Redding's shop, propose to Redding and his friends that he should get "Bill Holmes" and "give them h—l." The next witness saw Johnson in the street immediately after, in company with "Bill Holmes," who seems to have been the Achilles of these Myrmidons; explaining to him how his dear Patroclus, Redding, had been insulted by the hectoring Mississippians, and urging him to vengeance. Again the same witness met Johnson, and was informed by him that a portion of his banditti had already taken possession of the passes of the Galt House, and that if the Mississippians appeared, "their hides wouldn't hold shucks." The third witness swears to a positive solicitation from Johnson, that he should join in the foray, and to the expression of strong indignation by this slayer of cattle upon his refusal to do so.

Johnson was the "Malise" of the party, "the messenger of blood and brand" sent forth to summon the clansmen true. Too well did he perform his duty. He collected his friends, and conducted them like beasts to the slaughter; while he himself found the "manhood," which, according to his boast, distended his hide, rapidly descending to his heels. But enough, for the present, of this vaporing worthy; I shall pay my respects to him hereafter.

I will now proceed, in pursuance of the plan I had prescribed, to show the existence of the conspiracy, by the circumstantial evidence, which is, if possible, more irrefragable than the direct

testimony; but yet most beautifully illustrates and confirms it. I will exhibit to you a chain of facts, linked together by a natural and necessary connection, which I defy even the strong arm of the opposing counsel to break. I will weave a cable, upon whose unyielding strength the defence may safely rely to ride out the storm of this furious prosecution.

Mr. Redding went to the Galt House after the affair at his shop, for the purpose, as he avows, of obtaining the names of the Mississippians, that he might procure process against them from the civil authorities. On his way, as he confesses, he armed himself with a deadly weapon, which, however, I am bound in justice to say, he never had the courage to use. A number of individuals accompanied and followed him whose manner and strange appearance excited universal attention, even in the bar-room of the most frequented hotel in the Western country. Their strange faces and strange action excited general apprehension. Nearly every witness to the unfortunate catastrophe, has deposed that he was struck with the "strange faces" congregated in the bar-room. The learned counsel on the other side, has attempted to prove in the examination, and will, no doubt, insist in the argument, that that room is daily crowded with strangers from every part of the country; that the excellence of the fare, and the urbanity of its proprietors, invite to the Galt House a large portion of the travelling public; and that, consequently, it is nowise remarkable that strange faces should be observed in the bar-room. Though I admit the gentleman's premises, I deny his conclusion. That strangers should frequent the Galt House is not wonderful; they do it every day; and for that very reason, strange faces, under ordinary circumstances, arouse neither remark nor attention. That the "strange faces" of Mr. Redding's friends should have excited remark and scrutiny, not only from the inmates of the House, but from strangers themselves, is truly wonderful, and can be accounted for only by admitting that there was something very peculiar in their conduct and appearance.

They went there prepared for preconcerted action. Having a common object, and a well arranged plan, a glance, or a mo-

tion, sufficed to convey intelligence from one to the other. Tell-tale consciences spoke from each countenance. Their looks, unlike the mystic sign of the mysterious brotherhood, gave up to the observer the very secret they wished thereby to conceal. There is a strange and subtle influence, a kind of mental sense, by which we acquire intimation of men's intentions, even before they have ripened into word or action. It seems, on such occasions, as if information was conveyed to the mind, by a sort of natural animal-magnetism, without the intervention of the senses.

Thus, in this case, all the bystanders were impressed at once, with the conviction that violence was intended by the strange men who had attracted their attention. These men, it is proven, were the friends and intimate companions of Redding. Most of them, though living in the city of Louisville, were not in the habit of going to the Galt House, and yet, by singular coincidence, had all assembled there on this occasion.

They were remarkably stout men, constituting the very elite of the thews and muscle of Louisville, and many of them noted for their prowess in the vulgar broils of the city. Why had they thus congregated on this occasion?—Why their strange and suspicious demeanor? I will show you why. It will not be necessary to await the actual fight to become fully conversant with their purpose. It found vent in various shapes, but chiefly bubbled out in the unguarded remarks, and almost involuntary expressions of the more garrulous of the party.

I shall be compelled, even at the risk of being tedious, to glance at the evidence of a number of the witnesses in showing you the circumstances at the Galt House, which conclusively indicate the existence of the conspiracy.

Mr. Everett, one of the proprietors of the Galt House, says he was admonished by his bar-keeper that a difficulty was about to arise, and he had better persuade Judge Wilkinson out of the bar-room. Accordingly, he went in and took the Judge away, and gives as a reason that he was alarmed at the strange faces in the bar-room, and apprehended difficulty; alarmed, not because the faces were those of strangers, but because of something in

their appearance which indicated concert and threatened violence.

Mr. Trabue was waiting in the room for supper, and says he heard some one remark, "if the Mississippians had not gone up stairs, they would have been badly treated;" in connection with which remark, Redding was pointed out to him. This, it seems, was after the Judge had retired at the solicitation of Mr. Everett. Now, who were to have treated the Mississippians badly, except Mr. Redding and his friends? Who else had any pretence for so doing? Can you doubt for a moment that the remark had reference to Mr. Redding's party? It was probably made by one of them; but whether by one of them or a stranger, it equally indicated their violent determinations. Mr. Trabue also proves that after Judge Wilkinson retired, Mr. Redding also retired; and when the Judge returned into the bar-room, Redding presently entered; followed, to use the language of Mr. Trabue "by a right smart crowd" of his friends. Now why did Redding thus go out, and return with his gang at his heels? Why were his movements thus regulated by the motions of the Judge?—Wherefore was it, that every one expected a difficulty?

Mr. Redding, according to his own story, went to the Galt House simply for the purpose of obtaining the names of the gentlemen who had insulted him.

He had accomplished his ostensible object. He had obtained the names, and more than that, he had gratified his base appetite, by abusing one of the gentlemen in the most indecent and disgusting manner. No rowdy who ever visited his coffee-house, could have excelled him in this, to the vulgar mind, sweet mode of vengeance. He had even driven the Judge from the room by the overwhelming torrent of his billingsgate epithets. To use an expression suited to his comprehension and feelings, he remained "cock of the walk." Yet he was not satisfied. He retired, and watched the return of the Judge, and then, emboldened by his previous impunity, followed with his cut-throat band to complete the work of vengeance.

But to proceed with the circumstantial evidence. Mr. Montgomery states that he was with Mr. Trabue at the Galt House,

when Redding came in after the names, and also when he came back just before the conflict; heard him use very rough language, and also, heard Halbert remark that there would be "rough work with the Mississippians." Now this fully corroborates the testimony of Mr. Trabue on the same point, who heard the remark, but did not recollect who made it. This Marshall Halbert is the man who boasted, after the affair was over, that he had knocked down one of the Mississippians with a chair, while his back was towards him, and recounted many other feats of daring to the astonishment of the listeners.

I should judge him to be of the blood of honest Jack Falstaff, whose killing, as everybody knows, was always by word of mouth, and whose deeds of desperate valor were so unfortunate as to find neither historian nor believer, except himself. At all events Halbert, according to his own confession, was one of the conspirators, and I have no doubt performed his part in the affray as well as he knew how, and with much greater humanity than he pretends. In addition to the above remark of Halbert's, Mr. Montgomery states that he heard several persons say, at a time when the defendants were not in the room, that they would beat the Mississippians well.

General Chambers, who lives opposite the Galt House, and is in the daily habit of visiting it, says he went into the bar-room just before the affray, that he observed persons whom he was not in the habit of seeing there, and that from their appearance and demeanor, his suspicions were immediately aroused.

I attach great weight to the testimony of General Chambers. His character for intelligence and observation needs no comment from me, and the fact that his suspicions were aroused, must convince every one that cause for alarm existed.

The next testimony to which I shall refer, is that of Mr. Oliver. He says that he was acquainted with Mr. Meeks, and was taking a social glass with him on the evening of the affray when Meeks started off, saying he must go to the Galt House, (which was on the opposite side of the street), that he was bound to have a fight that night, and "by G—d he would have one." You will recollect, that Meeks was one of the persons

who collected around Redding, immediately after the affair at the shop, and seconded Johnson's proposition to get Bill Holmes and "give them h—l," by saying "they would go anyhow, and have a spree." Can you doubt, for a moment, that the observation made by this unfortunate man to Mr Oliver, as just recited, had relation to the previous arrangement with Johnson and others, at Redding's shop? The remark of Meeks seems to me, taken in connection with his previous and subsequent conduct, almost conclusive of itself as to the existence of a conspiracy. I had almost forgotten to observe Mr. Oliver's statement that Meeks, before he started, tied a knot in the small end of a cowhide which he carried, manifestly to prevent it from slipping out of his hand in the conflict which he so eagerly courted. His knife, by a sort of pious fraud, had been taken from him by Mr. Oliver, otherwise the result might have been very different. The prudent caution of Mr. Oliver in disarming him of his weapon, proves how strong must have been the indications of his violent disposition.

Mr. Reaugh says he was at the Galt House on the evening of the affray, and saw Redding in conversation with Rothwell and Halbert—he also saw Holmes and Johnson. Something in the demeanor of the party, induced him to ask Johnson what was the matter. Johnson replied by relating the affair of the shop. Upon which Reaugh observed "if the Mississippians fall into the hands of these men, they will fare rather rough." "Yes," replied the worthy butcher, "they would skin them quicker than I could skin a sheep." Mr. Reaugh states that he made the remark to Johnson, because of the remarkable size and strength of the men to whom he alluded, the strange manner in which they had assembled, and the fact that he knew them to be friends of Redding, and that Redding had been in a quarrel with the Mississippians.

Mr. Miller states that being a member of the grand jury, and having heard of the affray at Redding's, he went into a tin-shop to inquire about the matter, when Mr. Halbert came in and boasted much of what he intended to do. Witness then went to the Galt House for supper, when he heard Redding abus-

ing Judge Wilkinson, and challenging him for a fight. Witness advised Halbert to take Redding away, observing that he, witness, was on the grand jury, had the names, and would have all the matter attended to. Some one, he thinks Johnson, then remarked that "if he didn't leave the room, he'd see the finest sort of beef-steaks served up." Presently he heard the exclamation, near the counter, "there they are, all three of them!" and the crowd immediately closed in upon the persons so indicated.

Mr. Waggry, also, heard the remark about the "steaks," and then heard some one exclaim, "we'll have a h—l of a fight here just now." He also heard Mr. Miller advise Halbert to take Redding away.

Mr. Brown swears that he heard Mr. Miller tell Mr. Redding he was not taking the proper course; he should have the matter before the grand jury; whereupon some one said "hush you Billy Miller, if it comes to handy-cuffs, the boys will settle it." The witness then became so apprehensive of a fight that he left the room.

Now, though Miller is not positive as to the person who made use of the expression about "serving up beef-steaks," yet no one, I take it, will hesitate as to his identity. Who but Johnson could speak in such rich and technical language? Who but Johnson could boast of "having as much manhood as was ever wrapped in the same extent of hide?" While, at the same time, he had so arranged it, that the "hides" of the Mississippians "would not hold shucks." Who but this unmitigated savage would talk of "skinning" a gentleman "quicker than I could skin a sheep?" Why he rubs his hands, licks his lips, and talks of serving up Christians in the shape of "steaks," with as little compunction as you or I would exhibit in eating a radish. The cannibal! He should go at once to New Zealand and open his shambles there. His character would suit that country; and I doubt not he would obtain great custom, and find ample demand for his human "steaks." Why, gentlemen, I should be afraid to buy meat out of his stall. He talks as if he supplied it by burking. I should expect some day to swallow an unbaptized

infant in the disguise of a reeking pig, or to eat a fellow-citizen, *incog.* in a "steak." Such a fellow should be looked to. But again. What meant the expression deposed to by Reaugh, "there they are, all three of them now"? It was the signal for the conspirators to close in. It clearly proves a pre-concerted plan; no names were mentioned, and without a previous understanding, the expression would have been nonsense. Most of the party did not know the Mississippians; hence it was necessary that some one should give intimation when they entered the room. The expression, "There they are," was the signal for the onset. What meant the expression, sworn to by Waggry, "We'll have a hell of a fight here just now"?

What conclusion do you draw from the response made to Miller, when he advised Redding to bring the matter before the grand jury, "Hush you, Billy Miller, and if it comes to handy-cuffs the boys will settle it?" If what comes to handy-cuffs! And who were the boys? Why, if the quarrel with the Mississippians comes to handy-cuffs, and as for the "boys," there was not a man present who did not know who they were.

Redding was one of the "boys," and a very bad boy too. Billy Holmes was another; Marshall Halbert was a "perfect broth of a boy," and if his own story is entitled to credit, he must have been twins, for he acted the part of at least two in the fight. Bill Johnson was as much of a boy as ever was "wrapped up in the same amount of hide," though his extraordinary modesty has induced him to deny the soft impeachment. The unfortunate Meeks and Rothwell were two of the "boys;" and last though not least, comes Harry Oldham, the "Jack Horner" of the party. He "sat in the corner" till the fight was nearly over, when he "put in his thumb" and "pulled out," not "a plum," but a pistol; and ever since, has been exclaiming, "What a brave 'boy' am I."

Yes, gentleman of the jury, these were the "boys" whose strange appearance aroused the suspicions and excited the apprehensions of all.

Permit me, now, to call your attention to the testimony of Mr. Donahue. It is clear and conclusive. He swears that on

the evening of the affray, and just before it occurred, being in the bar-room of the Galt House, he heard Rothwell ask Redding "if they were there?"—upon being answered in the negative, he exclaimed, "come let us go up stairs and bring them down, and give them h—l." Rothwell was the brother-in-law of Redding, had been informed by Redding of his grievances, and had accompanied him to the Galt House. Whom did he mean, when he asked if "they were there?" The Mississippians undoubtedly. Whom did he propose to drag from their rooms, and chastise? Of course the same persons for whom he had just inquired, Rothwell asked if "they were there?" when the defendants came in, some one cried out "there they are, all three of them!" These two expressions manifestly emanated from persons who understood each other, and were engaged in pursuit of a common object.

If these remarks had not relation to some previously concerted plan of action, they would be unmeaning and foolish; but granting the existence of the conspiracy I have supposed, and every word is pregnant with meaning: full of force, weight and effect.

Mr. Baily deposes to the caution given by Miller to Redding; also to the fact that Redding left the room when Judge Wilkinson had retired, and came back again immediately after the Judge had returned. He also saw Oldham after the affair was over, putting a pistol into his pocket, and wiping, with his handkerchief, the blood from a double-edged dirk.

Mr. Pearson says he went to the Galt House just before supper, on the evening of the affray. As he stood behind the bar, one Capt. Rogers observed that there would be a fight. Presently, witness met Marshall Halbert, and told him he ought to stop it, meaning the fight. Halbert said "no, let it go on." This was before Redding had commenced abusing Judge Wilkinson, and proves that the idea of a fight did not originate from that circumstance. The Judge came, and Redding abused him. He went out, and Redding followed. He returned, and presently so did Redding with a crowd at his heels. Seeing the crowd, and apprehending violence, Mr. Pearson was in the act of leading the Judge out of the room, when the crowd rushed upon Mur-

daugh; the affray commenced, and the Judge stopped, refusing to leave the room until he saw his friends out of the difficulty. Need I ask you whether he was right in so doing?

Mr. Banks says he saw Redding just after the first affray, and asked him if he was hurt. He said no, but that "he would have satisfaction," and that "he could whip them all three."

Dr. Graham says that after Judge Wilkinson had left the bar-room, the first time, he heard some one observe, "the d——d coward has run."

Does not Mr. Oldham's testimony * prove the conspiracy? I

* MR. OLDHAM'S TESTIMONY.

Question. Were you in the bar-room when the fighting was going on?

Answer. No; I was going in through the bar-room door, when I think it was Dr. Wilkinson was rushing out, and cut me in the arm, and I knocked him down. Mr. Holmes then came to the passage with a raised chair, and struck at the Judge, breaking the chair against the door. The Judge ran to the stairs. Mr. Holmes struck Mr. Murdaugh at the stairs with the chair. Mr. Murdaugh got up towards the head of the stairs, and hallooed for his pistol. That put me in mind of my pistol, and I took it out and fired it at him.

Q. Where did you say you were cut?

A. In the arm, as I attempted to enter the bar-room door.

Q. Was there any concert for you to go to the Galt House that evening?

A. None at all.

Q. Why did you knock the Doctor down?

A. Because he had cut me in the arm.

Q. Was there any provocation on your part to induce him to cut you?

A. No. I knew none of the gentlemen. Why he cut me in the arm I am unable to tell. I am confident he never saw me before.

CROSS-EXAMINED.—*Q.* How long had you been in the Galt House then?

A. Three or four minutes—but I had been in the bar-room at first before it began.

Q. Name such of the persons as you saw there then?

A. I saw Mr. Holmes, Mr. Rothwell, and Mr. Halbert in the bar-room. When they came in they asked me to take some liquor, which I did. A gentleman came and asked to see me, and I went away with him; we staid out some time, talking about boats which he said he had laying at the mouth of the Kentucky river. We were talking outside, when I could hear chairs rattling, and then on trying to go into the bar-room, I got the cut in the arm.

CROSS-EXAMINED.—*Q.* When were you first in the bar-room that evening?

A. Before any fuss began at all there.

Q. Did you not remain to see the fuss?

A. I went out at the time of the fuss.

Q. Were there not many people there, and in the passages?

A. There appeared to be a good many, and some fuss in the passage.

Q. What sort of knife was you cut with?

do not mean directly, but circumstantially. He says he was not present at the fight in the bar-room, and knew nothing of the

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A. I was cut with a dirk knife.

Q. Can you be positive who cut you?

A. Doctor Wilkinson was the man that cut me, and I knocked him down for it.

Q. Had you given him by word or gesture, no cause for doing it?

A. I had not.

Q. Did you not go there to have a fight?

A. No. I went there accidentally—it was on my way home. I fought on my own hook.

Q. You shot at Murdaugh on your own hook?

A. At the head of the stairs, when he hallooed out for his pistol, I took the advantage to get out mine, and I fired at him.

Q. When the Doctor was coming out of the door was he not cut and bruised and disabled?

A. I could not see by him, whether he was or not.

Q. Did you tell all this at the Examining Court?

A. I stated the same there as here.

Q. What coloured handle had the knife which the Doctor cut you with?

A. I think it was a white handled knife.

Q. Did you fire before you were stabbed?

A. No, I was stabbed first.

Q. And you had your pistol prepared with two bullets?

A. No; there were not two bullets; but there was one bullet cut in three pieces. It had been two or three days loaded.

Q. Well, you had other weapons?

A. I had a Bowie knife.

Q. Was the pistol a rifle barrelled pistol?

A. Yes.

Q. How came you to arm yourself thus?

A. I usually carry a bowie-knife and a pistol about me since I belonged to the City Guard last summer.

Q. Of course you used your bowie-knife with effect that evening?

A. I did not use it on that occasion.

Q. You certainly displayed it?

A. The button on the scabbard came off, and it slipped through my pantaloons.

Q. Was there not blood on it?

A. There could be no blood on it, but it had a red scabbard, which may have been mistaken.

Q. Did you not wipe blood off with your handkerchief?

A. I am confident I did not, for there could be none on it.

Q. Do you say you made no exhibition of it?

A. A gentleman at Zanone's Coffee-House asked me to show him a bowie-knife, and I showed him mine—that is the only exhibition could be talked of.

Q. Did you hear of the affair at Redding's?

A. Not till I went to the Galt House. I did not even hear of it till the Galt-House affair commenced. I did not hear of it before I went into the bar-room.—Ed.

affair, nor of the defendants. He says he was standing in the passage when the door opened, and he received a cut from Dr. Wilkinson, whom he knocked down for his pains.

After fighting in the crowd awhile, he saw Murdaugh retreating up stairs, and heard him asking for a pistol, whereupon he was reminded of his own pistol, which he immediately drew and discharged at the young gentleman, giving him not the weapon, but its contents, to wit: a bullet split in three pieces. This worthy gentleman, who is certainly

> ——————"as mild a mannered man
> As ever scuttled ship, or cut a throat,"

swears positively that he did not know either of the defendants; that he belonged to neither party in the affray; and that he fought, to use his own descriptive and unrivalled phraseology, entirely "upon his own hook."

Surely, Mr. Henry Oldham must be the knight errant of the age; the Don Quixote of the West; the paragon of modern chivalry.

He fights, not from base desire of vengeance, nor from sordid love of gold; not even from patriotism or friendship; but from a higher and a loftier sentiment; from his pure, ardent, disinterested, unsophisticated love of glorious strife. Like Job's war-horse, he "smelleth the battle afar off," and to the sound of the trumpet, he saith, ha! ha! To him

> "There is something of pride in the perilous hour,
> Whate'er be the shape in which death may lower,
> For fame is there, to tell who bleeds,
> And honor's eye on daring deeds."

You have heard, gentlemen, of the bright, warm isles which gem the oriental seas, and are kissed by the fiery sun of the tropics; where the clove, the cinnamon, and the nutmeg grow; where the torrid atmosphere is oppressed with a delicious, but fierce and intoxicating influence. There the spirit of man partakes of the same spicy qualities which distinguish the productions of the soil. Even as the rinds of their fruits split open

with nature's rich excess, so do the human passions burst forth with an overwhelming violence and prodigality unknown till now, in our cold, ungentle clime. There, in the islands of Java, Sumatra, the Malaccas, and others of the same latitude, cases similar to that of Mr. Henry Oldham are of frequent occurrence. In those countries it is called "running a muck." An individual becomes so full of fight that he can no longer contain it; accordingly, he arms himself with a species of dagger, very similar to that from which Mr. Oldham wiped the blood with his pocket handkerchief, and rushing into the public streets, wounds and slays indiscriminately among the crowd. It is true, that this gallant exploit always results in the death of the person performing it; the people of the country entertaining a foolish notion that it is too dangerous and expensive a mode of cultivating national bravery. But, in the present instance, I trust this rule will be relaxed. Mr. Oldham is the only specimen we possess of this peculiar habit of the spice islands, and he should be preserved as a curiosity.

But, alas! the age of chivalry has gone by; and in the performance of my duty, I fear I shall have to exhibit some little defects in the character of Mr. Oldham, calculated in this censorious day to detract from his general merits.

It is with great pain, I feel constrained to say, (for he is a sort of favorite of mine), that telling the truth is not one of his knightly accomplishments, and that his heroic conduct in the affray at the Galt House was nothing more nor less, according to his own story, than a downright cowardly attempt at assassination.

First, as to his veracity. He says that he was cut in the passage, by Doctor Wilkinson, to whose identity he swears positively; yet it is proven by half a dozen unimpeachable witnesses, that the Doctor was at that time, *hors de combat*, beaten to a mummy—almost lifeless, and perfectly limber—while his knife had fallen from his relaxed and nerveless grasp upon the floor of the bar-room, where it was afterwards picked up.

Yet Oldham swears, manfully, that it was the Doctor who cut him, though when asked if his face was not bloody, he replied that the passage was too dark to enable him distinguish faces.

If he could not see whether the face of the person who cut him was bruised or bloody, how dares he swear it was Doctor Wilkinson, whom he admits he had never seen before?

Yet, though his vision was so dull in regard to this matter, it was almost supernaturally keen upon another. He swears that he was cut by a dirk knife *with a "white handle."* Now in this dusky passage, where he could not see his assailant's face, how could he distinguish so accurately the character of the weapon, and more especially, of the handle. The handle of such a knive as either of those exhibited, would be entirely concealed in the grasp of the holder. But Mr. Oldham could see through the hand, and swear to the color of the handle, even when he could not distinguish the color of the assailant's face.

The prosecution seems to be afflicted with a monomania on the subject of white-handled knives. The white-handles cause them greater terror, and excite more of their observation, than the blades. One would almost be led to suppose, from the evidence, that the defendants held by the blades, and fought with the handles. These white handles flash before their eyes like the bright inscription upon the dim steel of a Turkish cimeter. I hope, though with many misgivings, that none of them will ever die of a "white handle."

But, to return to my subject, why, in the name of all that is human or humane, did Oldham shoot at Murdaugh, whom, he acknowledges, he did not know; of whose connection with Doctor Wilkinson he was unacquainted; and who had not attempted to do him the slightest injury? According to his own account of the matter, he acted the part of a base and cowardly assassin. If he tells the truth, he is an assassinating villain: if he does not, he is a perjured villain. I leave him choice of these two horns of the dilemma, though I doubt not the latter is the one upon which he is destined to hang. I cannot believe in the existence of such a monster as he would make himself out to be; and have offered his conduct to you as evidence of the existence of a conspiracy, and of his participation in it. It is better that he should have the excuse of having fought in Redding's quarrel than no excuse at all.

Gentlemen of the Jury—I have now performed that portion of my task, which embraced the circumstantial evidence. Out of the mouths of fifteen different witnesses, most of them gentlemen of high character and undoubted veracity, I have exhibited to you an almost countless variety of circumstances, the occurrence of which, or of any great portion of them, is absolutely incompatible with any other hypothesis than that of the existence of the conspiracy, which I proposed at the outset to prove.

Upon that hypothesis, all these circumstances are easily explicable, and in perfect accordance with the ordinary principles of human action.

I have combined the scattered strands of evidence: I have finished the cable which I promised; and now challenge the opposing counsel to try their strength upon it. They may pick it into oakum; but I defy them to break it.

There is one other argument in favor of the view that I have taken of the origin of this unfortunate affray, which may be properly introduced at this time, and with which I shall close this branch of the subject.

It arises out of the respective characters and positions in life of the two parties, and is, in my opinion, entitled to great weight. Who, in view of his character and situation, was most likely to have sought and provoked the unfortunate conflict—Judge Wilkinson or Mr. Redding? The conduct of the Judge, under the opprobrious epithets heaped upon him by Redding, in the bar-room, sufficiently indicates, that though he had previously given way to sudden passion, he was now cool, collected, and forbearing. His mind had recovered its balance, and he behaved on this occasion, as well as subsequently, with philosophical calmness. I doubt, gentlemen, whether any of you would have permitted Mr. Redding to indulge, with impunity, in such unmeasured abuse. But the situation of the Judge was peculiar, and every inducement which could operate upon a gentleman, warned him against participation in broils and battles. With buoyant feelings and pulse-quickening anticipations, he had come more than a thousand miles, upon a pilgrimage to

the shrine of beauty, and not of blood; upon an errand of love, and not of strife. He came to transplant one of Kentucky's fairest flowers to the warm gardens of the sunny South. The marriage feast was spread; the bridal wreath was woven; and many bounding hearts and sparkling eyes chided the lagging hours. The thoughts of the bridegroom dwelt not upon the ignoble controversy, which, for an unguarded moment, had occupied his attention, but upon the bright and glorious future, whose rapturous visions were about to become enchanting realities.

Under such circumstances, Judge Wilkinson could not have desired the conflict. Had the fires of hell blazed in his bosom, they must have been quenched for a while. The very fiend of discord would have been ashamed, fresh from a voluntary, vulgar, bloody quarrel, and reeking with its unsightly memorials, to have sought the gay wedding banquet.

You cannot believe he coveted or courted the unfortunate affray, without, at the same time, considering him destitute, not only of all sentiment of delicacy and refinement, but of every characteristic of a man. Does his previous character warrant such a conclusion? He has, as has been shown to you in evidence, ever maintained the character of an honorable and upright gentleman. I see, by the sneer upon the lip of the adverse counsel, that the term grates harshly upon his sensibilities. But, I repeat it, Judge Wilkinson has ever maintained the character of a gentleman; a character directly at war with the supposition that his conduct on this occasion, resulted otherwise than from necessity. I mean, by "a gentleman," not the broadcloth, but the man; one who is above doing a mean, a cowardly or a dishonest action, whatever may be the temptation; one who forms his own standard of right and will not swerve from it; who regards the opinions of the world much, but his own self-respect more. Such men are confined to no particular class of society, though, I fear, they do not abound in any. I will save the learned counsel the trouble of translating his sneer into language, by admitting that they are to be found as readily among mechanics as elsewhere.

Such a man I believe Judge Wilkinson to be. Such has ever

been his character, and he is entitled to the benefit of it on this occasion. It ought to have, and I know will have very great weight with you. Good character always has been, and ever should be, a wall of strength around its possessor, a seven-fold shield to him who bears it.

This is one of the advantages which virtue has over vice—honorable over dishonorable conduct—an advantage which it is the very highest interest of society to cherish and enforce. In proportion to the excellence of a man's character, is, and ever ought to be, the violence of the presumption that he has been guilty of crime. I appeal, then, to Judge Wilkinson's character, to prove that he could not have desired this unfortunate controversy; that it is impossible he should have been guilty, under the circumstances which then surrounded him, of the crime of willful and malicious murder. What, on the other hand, was the condition of the conspirators? Redding had been going about from street to street, like Peter the Hermit, preaching up a crusade against the Mississippians. Johnson, like Tecumseh—but no, I will not assimilate him to that noble warrior—like an Indian runner, was threading each path in the city, inciting his tribe to dig up the tomahawk and drive it, not into the scalps, but the "steaks" of the foe. But I will not pursue this point at greater length.

I proposed, after arguing the position, that there actually was a conspiracy to chastise the defendants, and inflict upon them great bodily harm, to show, in the next place, that the defendants had good reason to believe such a conspiracy existed, whether in point of fact it did or not. Most of the arguments bearing upon this proposition have been already advanced in support of the other. These I will not repeat. There are one or two others worthy of notice. What could Judge Wilkinson have supposed from the conduct of Redding, but that he sought and provoked a difficulty? What else could he conclude from the unmitigated abuse which was heaped upon him, from the opening of the very sluices of vulgarity? That the Judge apprehended violence is evident from the warning which he gave. He told Redding that he might say what he pleased, but not to

lay his hands upon him; if he did, he would kill him. He could not be supposed to know that Redding came only for the names. When Meeks stepped up to Murdaugh and struck him with his clubbed whip, while the crowd closed in around, what could Murdaugh reasonably expect but violence and bodily harm, resulting from preconcerted arrangement? Without going at length into an argument on this point, I take it for granted, no one will deny that the defendants had ample grounds for apprehending the existence, on the part of Mr. Redding and his friends, of a conspiracy to commit upon them personal violence.

Let us now look a moment at the conduct of the defendants, at the Galt House, and see whether it transcended the bounds of right, reason or prudence. When Murdaugh and the Doctor entered the room, the exclamation was made, by some one, loud enough for all to hear, "There they are—all three of them, now;" upon which, according to nearly all the witnesses, Mr. Redding made the remark to Murdaugh, "You are the man that drew the bowie-knife on me." You will recollect Redding had just crossed Judge Wilkinson's path, and placed himself with his back against the counter, manifestly with the object of bringing on the fight. Murdaugh, indignant at being publicly charged with having drawn a bowie-knife upon an unarmed man, replied, "that any one who said he had drawn a bowie-knife told a d—d lie;" whereupon instantly steps up Meeks, with his knotted cow-hide, exclaiming, "You are the d—d little rascal that did it"—at the same time inflicting upon him a very severe blow. By-the-by, this assertion of Meeks proves that he had been at Redding's after the first affray, and heard a full account of it. It is urged against the Judge, that when Mr. Everett led him to his room, he asked for pistols. I think an argument in his favor may be drawn from this circumstance. His requisition for arms proves that he considered himself and his friends in great personal danger. He manifestly required them not for offence, but for defence. Had he intended an attack, he would not have gone down to the bar-room without first obtaining the weapons he desired. Men do not voluntarily attempt the lives of others without being well prepared. It is evident that Judge Wilkin-

son and his friends thought only of the protection of their own persons; for they went down stairs provided only with the ordinary weapons which they were accustomed to bear. Murdaugh and the Doctor had a pocket knife each; the same they had previously carried. They had added nothing to their armor, either offensive or defensive. The Judge, apprehensive of difficulty, had taken his bowie-knife, which probably, he had not previously worn. When, at the solicitation of Mr. Everett, he retired, he doubtless informed his friends of what had just transpired in the bar-room, and expressed his fears of violence. This accounts for the readiness with which Murdaugh met the assault of the two powerful men who simultaneously rushed upon him.

The evidence is conclusive that Meeks commenced the attack upon Murdaugh, by two rapid, violent blows of a cow-hide; accompanied by a heavy blow from a stick or cane in the hands of Rothwell. At the same time he seized the hand of Murdaugh, in which, prepared for defence, was an open knife; but Murdaugh, with coolness and celerity, changed the weapon to his left hand, and used it according to the dictates both of law and common sense. The very first blow had driven him to the wall. The crowd closed around him; he could not retreat, and was justified, according to the strictest and most technical principles of even English jurisprudence, to take the life of the assailant. No man but a fool or a coward could have acted otherwise than he did. Was he not, according to the rule read by the District Attorney, in imminent danger of his life or of great bodily harm? Let the unhealed wound upon his head respond. Let his hat, which has been exhibited to you, answer the question. Upon this you may perceive two incisions, which must have been caused by a sharp, cutting instrument. No obtuse weapon was capable of the effect. The blows were manifestly sufficient to have caused death, but for the intervention of the elastic material, upon which their principal force was expended. The part, then, taken by Mr. Murdaugh in the affray was clearly defensive and justifiable. It is not pretended that Doctor Wilkinson took any other part in the affray than attempting to escape from its violence, unless you notice the evidence of Oldham, that he cut him

as he fled from the room. He was beaten, first by Rothwell, then by Holmes, and if you take their own statements, by those two worthies, Halbert and Oldham. He was crushed almost to atoms. He had not a chance even for self-defence. Rothwell had left Murdaugh, after striking him one blow, in charge of Meeks, and fell upon the Doctor. While beating the Doctor, he was stabbed by the Judge, near the dining-room door. The Doctor fled round the room, still followed by Rothwell, who was again struck by the Judge, when upon the opposite side. The two blows paralyzed his powers; when Holmes stepped in and so completely prostrated the Doctor, that he was compelled to hold him up with one hand while he beat him with the other.

Neither offensive word nor action, upon this occasion, on the part of Dr. Wilkinson, is proven or pretended. It is perfectly clear that he was beaten by Redding's friends, simply because he was of the Mississippi party. I consider it highly disgraceful to the Grand Jury who found the bill, that he was included in it.

In reference to the part taken by Judge Wilkinson. It is proven beyond contradiction, by Mr. Pearson, a gentleman of undoubted veracity, that the Judge, at his solicitation, was in the act of leaving the room, as the affray commenced; when, witnessing the attack upon Murdaugh, he stopped, refusing to leave until he saw the result of the controversy in which his friend was engaged. Standing in the corner of the room, he did not at first take part in the conflict; perceiving, doubtless, that Murdaugh was making good his own defence. Presently, however, he cast his eyes around and saw his brother trodden under foot, entirely powerless, and apparently either dead or in immediate danger from the fierce blows of Rothwell, who, as you have heard, was a man of tremendous physical power, and armed with a bludgeon, some say a sword cane. Then it was he thought it necessary to act; and advancing through the crowd to the spot, he wounded the assailant who was crushing out his brother's life. Gen. Chambers swears positively that Rothwell was beating, with a stick, and with great severity, some one, whom the other witnesses identify as the Doctor, at

the time he was stabbed near the dining-room door. This produced a slight diversion in the Doctor's favor, who availed himself of it, by retreating, in a stooping posture, towards the passage door. Rothwell, however, pursued and beat him down, but was arrested in his violence, by another blow from Judge Wilkinson, which, together with the puncture in his throat, received, in all probability, from a chance thrust of the sword cane in the hands of one of his own party, disabled him and caused his death. About this time Holmes was completing Rothwell's unfinished work, and the Doctor, hunted entirely around the room, fell, utterly exhausted, at the feet of his relentless pursuers. It is wonderful that he had strength enough to escape with Murdaugh and the Judge.

Such, briefly, were the parts enacted by these defendants, respectively, in this unfortunate affray—the result of which, none regret more than themselves. Considering the proof of the conspiracy, and the knowledge, or even the reasonable apprehension on the part of the defendants, of its existence, as affording them ample justification for their participation in the matter, I have not thought it necessary to go into a minute analysis of the evidence on this branch of the subject, nor to attempt to reconcile those slight discrepancies which will always occur in the testimony of the most veracious witnesses, in giving an account of a transaction viewed from different positions, and at different periods of time.

The law of self-defence has always had and ought to have a more liberal construction in this country than in England. Men claim more of personal independence here; of course they have more to defend. They claim more freedom and license in their actions towards each other, consequently there is greater reason for apprehending personal attack from an enemy. In this country men retain in their own hands a larger portion of their personal rights than in any other; and one will be authorized to presume an intention to exercise and enforce them, upon grounds that, in other countries, would not excite the slightest suspicion. It is the apprehension of impending harm, and not its actual existence, which constitutes the justification for defensive action. If

mine enemy point at me an unloaded pistol or a wooden gun, in a manner calculated to excite in my mind apprehensions of immediate, great bodily harm, I am justifiable in taking his life, though it turn out afterwards that I was in no actual danger.

So, on the other hand, if I take the life of another, without being aware of any intended violence on his part, it will constitute no excuse for me to prove that he intended an attack upon me.

The apprehension must be reasonable, and its reasonableness may depend upon a variety of circumstances—of time, place and manner, as well as of character. The same appearance of danger would authorize greater apprehension, and of course readier defensive action, at night than in the day-time. An attack upon one in his own house would indicate greater violence, and excuse stronger opposing action, than an attack in the street.

Indications of violence from an individual of known desperate and dangerous character will justify defensive and preventive action, which would be inexcusable towards a notorious coward. A stranger may reasonably indulge from the appearance or threats of a mob, apprehensions that would be unpardonable in a citizen surrounded by his friends and neighbors.

Bearing these observations in mind, let us look at the situation of the defendants. They were attacked at their hotel, which, for the time being, was their house. They were strangers, and a fierce mob had gathered around them, indicating, both by word and deed, the most violent intentions. They were three, small, weak men, without friends—for even the proprietor of the house, who should have protected them, had become alarmed, and left them to their fate. Their enemies were, comparatively, giants —dangerous in appearance and desperate in action. Was there not ample ground for the most fearful apprehensions?

But the District Attorney says they are not entitled to the benefit of the law of self-defence, because they came down to supper, and thus placed themselves, voluntarily, within reach of the danger. According to his view of the case, they should have remained in their chamber, in a state of siege, without the right to sally forth, even for provisions; while the enemy, cutting off

their supplies, would, doubtless, soon have starved them into a surrender. But it seems there was a private entrance to the supper table, and they should have skulked in through that. No one but a craven coward, unworthy of the privileges of a man, would have followed such a course. The ordinary entrance to supper was through the bar-room. They had a right to pass this way: no law forbade it. Every principle of independence and self-respect prompted it. And through that bar-room I would have gone, as they did, though the floor had been fresh sown with the fabled dragon's teeth, and bristling with its crop of armed men.

I care not whether the assailing party had deadly weapons or not; though I will, by-and-by, show they had, and used them too. But the true question is, whether the defendants had not good reason for believing them armed and every way prepared for a desperate conflict. I have shown already that Dr. Wilkinson and Murdaugh did not transcend the most technical principle laid down by the Commonwealth's attorney; not even that which requires a man to run to the wall before he can be permitted to defend himself—a principle which, in practice, is exploded in England, and never did obtain in this country at all. But, says the learned attorney, Judge Wilkinson interfered, and took part, before he was himself attacked: he had no right to anticipate the attack upon himself; he had no right to defend his friend; he had no right to protect his brother's life. Now I differ from the worthy counsel on all these points: I think he had a right to prevent, by anticipating it, violence upon his person; he had a right to defend his friend, and it was his sacred duty to protect his brother's life.

Judge Wilkinson was the most obnoxious of the party; his friends were already overpowered; he could not expect to escape; and in a moment the whole force of the bandit gang would have turned upon him.

The principles of self-defence, which pervade all animated nature, and act towards life the same part that is performed by the external mechanism of the eye towards the delicate sense of vision—affording it, on the approach of danger, at the same

time, warning and protection—do not require that action shall be withheld till it can be of no avail. When the rattlesnake gives warning of his fatal purpose, the wary traveller waits not for the poisonous blow, but plants upon his head his armed heel, and crushes out, at once, "his venom and his strength." When the hunter hears the rustling in the jungle, and beholds the large green eyes of the spotted tiger glaring upon him, he waits not for the deadly spring, but sends at once through the brain of his crouching enemy the swift and leaden death.

If war was declared against your country by an insulting foe, would you wait till your sleeping cities were wakened by the terrible music of the bursting bomb? till your green fields were trampled by the hoofs of the invader, and made red with the blood of your brethren? No! you would send forth fleets and armies—you would unloose upon the broad ocean your keen falcons—and the thunder of your guns would arouse stern echoes along the hostile coast. Yet this would be but national defence, and authorized by the same great principle of self-protection, which applies no less to individuals than to nations.

But Judge Wilkinson had no right to interfere in defence of his brother; so says the Commonwealth's attorney. Go, gentlemen, and ask your mothers and sisters whether that be law. I refer you to no musty tomes, but to the living volumes of Nature. What! A man not permitted to defend his brother against conspirators? against assassins, who are crushing out the very life of their bruised and powerless victim? Why, he who would shape his conduct by such a principle does not deserve to have a brother or a friend. To fight for self is but the result of an honest instinct, which we have in common with the brutes.

To defend those who are dear to us, is the highest exercise of the principle of self-defence. It nourishes all the noblest social qualities, and constitutes the germ of patriotism itself.

Why is the step of the Kentuckian free as that of the bounding deer; firm, manly, and confident, as that of the McGregor when his foot was on the heather of his native hills, and his eye on the peak of Ben Lomond? It is because he feels independent and proud; independent in the knowledge of his rights, and

proud in the generous consciousness of ability and courage to defend them, not only in his own person, but in the persons of those who are dear to him.

It was not the blood that would desert a brother or a friend, which swelled the hearts of your fathers in the "olden time," when, in defence of those they loved, they sought the red savage through all the fastnesses of his native forest. It was not such blood that was poured out, free as a gushing torrent, upon the dark banks of the melancholy Raisin, when all Kentucky manned her warrior sires. They were as bold and true as ever fought beneath a plume. The Roncesvalles pass, when fell before the opposing lance the harnessed chivalry of Spain, looked not upon a braver or a better band.

Kentucky has no law which precludes a man from defending himself, his brother, or his friend. Better for Judge Wilkinson had he never been born, than that he should have failed in his duty on this occasion. Had he acted otherwise than he did, he would have been ruined in his own estimation, and blasted in the opinions of the world. And young Murdaugh, too; he has a mother, who is looking even now from her window, anxiously watching for her son's return—but better, both for her and him, that he should have been borne a bloody corpse to her arms, than that he should have carried to her, unavenged, the degrading marks of the accursed whip.

But there was danger, as well as degradation. Their lives were in imminent hazard. Look at the cuts in Murdaugh's hat and upon his head, the stab received by the Judge, and the wounds inflicted upon the Doctor. Besides the overwhelming superiority in number and strength, the conspirators had very greatly the advantage in weapons. We have proven the exhibition and use, by them, of knives, dirks, a sword cane, and a pistol, without counting the bludgeons, which, in the hands of such men, are weapons little less deadly than the others.

Need I dwell longer upon this point? Need I say that the defendants are no murderers? that they acted in self defence, and took life from necessity, not from malice?

But there is a murderer—and, strange to say, his name appears

upon the indictment, not as criminal, but as prosecutor. His garments are wet with the blood of those upon whose deaths you hold this solemn inquest. Yonder he sits, allaying for a moment the hunger of that fierce vulture, conscience, by casting before it the food of pretended regret, and false, but apparent eagerness for justice. He hopes to appease the manes of his slaughtered victims---victims to his falsehood and treachery—by sacrificing upon their graves a hecatomb of innocent men. By base misrepresentations of the conduct of the defendants, he induced his imprudent friends to attempt a vindication of his pretended wrongs, by violence and bloodshed. His clansmen gathered at his call, and followed him for vengeance; but when the fight began, and the keen weapons clashed in the sharp conflict—where was this wordy warrior?—Aye, "Where was Roderick then?" No "blast upon his bugle horn" encouraged his companions as they were laying down their lives in his quarrel: no gleam of his dagger indicated a desire to avenge their fall—with treacherous cowardice he left them to their fate; and all his vaunted courage ended in ignominious flight.

Sad and gloomy is the path that lies before him. You will in a few moments dash, untasted, from his lips the sweet cup of revenge; to quaff whose intoxicating contents he has paid a price that would have purchased the goblet of the Egyptian queen. I behold gathering around him, thick and fast, dark and corroding cares. That face, which looks so ruddy, and even now is flushed with shame and conscious guilt, will from this day grow pale, until the craven blood shall refuse to visit his haggard cheek. In his broken and distorted sleep, his dreams will be more fearful than those of the "false, perjured Clarence;" and around his waking pillow, in the deep hour of night, will flit the ghosts of Rothwell and of Meeks, shrieking their curses in his shrinking ear.

Upon his head rests not only all the blood shed in this unfortunate strife, but also the soul-killing crime of perjury; for, surely as he lives, did the words of craft and falsehood fall from his lips, ere they were hardly loosened from the Holy Volume. But I dismiss him, and do consign him to the furies—trusting, in all charity, that the terrible punishment he must suffer from the

scorpion-lash of a guilty conscience will be considered in his last account.

Johnson and Oldham, too, are murderers at heart. But I shall make to them no appeal. There is no chord in their bosoms which can render back music to the touch of feeling. They have both perjured themselves. The former cut up the truth as coolly as if he had been carving meat in his own stall. The latter, on the contrary, was no longer the bold and hot-blooded knight; but the shrinking, pale-faced witness. Cowering beneath your stern and indignant gaze, marked you not how "his coward lip did from its color fly;" and how his quailing eye sought from floor to rafter protection from each honest glance.

It seems to me that the finger of Providence is visible in the protection of the defendants. Had this affair occurred at Mr. Redding's Coffee House, instead of the Galt House, nothing could have saved them. Their lives would have been sworn away, without remorse, by Redding and his gang. All that saved them from sacrifice was the accidental presence of gentlemen, whose testimony cannot be doubted, and who have given an honest and true account of the transaction.

Gentlemen of the Jury:—I shall detain you no longer. It was, in fact, a matter of supererogation for me to address you at all, after the lucid and powerful exposition of the case, which has been given by my respected friend, Col. Robertson. It was doubly so, when it is considered that I am to be succeeded by a gentleman (Judge Rowan), who, better, perhaps, than any other man living, can give you, from his profound learning and experience, a just interpretation of the laws of your State; and in his own person, a noble illustration of that proud and generous character which is a part of the birthright of a Kentuckian.

It is true, I had hoped, when the evidence was closed, that the Commonwealth's attorney might have found it in accordance with his duty and his feelings to have entered, at once, a *nolle prosequi*. Could the genius of "Old Kentucky" have spoken, such would have been her mandate. Blushing with shame at the inhospitable conduct of a portion of her sons, she would have hastened to make reparation.

Gentlemen—Let her sentiments be spoken by you. Let your

verdict take character from the noble State which you in part represent. Without leaving your box, announce to the world that here the defence of one's own person is no crime; and that the protection of a brother's life is the subject of approbation, rather than of punishment.

Gentlemen of the Jury:—I return you my most profound and sincere thanks for the kindness with which you have listened to me, a stranger, pleading the cause of strangers.

Your generous and indulgent treatment I shall ever remember with the most grateful emotions.

In full confidence that you, by your sense of humanity and justice, will supply the many defects in my feeble advocacy, I now resign into your hands the fate of my clients. As you shall do unto them, so, under like circumstances, may it be done unto you.

CHAPTER XVII.

Return to Vicksburg—Resumes the Practice of Law—Letters—Is solicited to become a Candidate for the Senate of the United States—Correspondence on the Subject—Letter to the Whigs of Madison County—Interest felt in the Election in other Parts of the Country—Letter to him from J. J. Crittenden—The Canvass—Letters.

ÆT. 30. 1839.

THE following letters will show with what satisfaction Mr. Prentiss turned his back upon politics, and devoted himself again to the practice of his profession. His very chirography betokens how grateful to him was the change. Most of his Washington letters were evidently scribbled off in a hurry; but no sooner did he find himself alone, once more, in his office at Vicksburg, than his handwriting becomes careful, clear, and indicative of a mind at rest.

TO HIS SISTER ABBY.

VICKSBURG, *March* 24, 1839.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I got home on yesterday, in good health, though somewhat fatigued with the journey. I stopped a week in Kentucky, to assist in the defence of Judge Wilkinson and his friends, who were tried on an indictment for murder, arising out of an affray which occurred at Louisville during the winter, and an exaggerated account of which you doubtless saw in the newspapers. Judge Wilkinson is an old friend of mine; you may recollect, he called and took tea with me several years ago, at Mrs. H——'s, in New York, at the time you were there. I

was very much gratified in complying with his request, notwithstanding my anxiety to get home. The trial took place at Harrodsburg, and resulted in the entire acquittal of the Judge and his friends, it appearing in evidence that they acted wholly in self-defence, against a number of men who had conspired together for the purpose of beating them. You will probably see some account of the trial in the newspapers. Times are very severe in Mississippi, and I fear will be still worse. There is no business doing, except in law, which is flourishing enough—too much so for the good of the people. I am going immediately into the practice, and shall have as much as I can attend to. You can hardly imagine my pleasure at being relieved from political obligations and labors, and returning to my professional pursuits. Indeed, I much prefer the practice of law to the practice of politics. I have not seen Judge Guion yet, and cannot, therefore, inform you whether he will visit Portland this summer. If he does not, of course I shall, for the purpose of bringing out Anna to spend the winter here, as I believe it is already understood. I am now waiting for a boat to go about one hundred miles up the river to attend a court, where I have a very important case. So, you see, I am going back to my profession right zealously.

As soon as I return, which will be in a week, I shall write again, and more at length. By-the-by, I saw S. at Cincinnati, for a few moments only; he was in fine health and spirits. I am quite impatient to hear from you, and hoped to find letters here, but was disappointed. I think I hear a boat coming up the river, so I must be off. Good-bye. My love to you all.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *April* 28, 1839.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I suppose my next letter will have to be addressed to you across the Atlantic. You must advise with some intelli-

gent person in New York as to the mode in which remittances are to be made. You will, of course, write to me before leaving, giving a minute account of your plans and arrangements. I suppose you will go out in one of the steam-packets. Take the Great Western, if you can. She is, doubtless, the safest as well as most convenient of them. By-the-by, tell me what you got from Mr. Webster; he promised me to give you both letters and counsel.* And now, my dear brother, good bye. May pleasant

* Mr. Webster gave me one letter, which proved so invaluable that I must be pardoned for seizing this opportunity to pay a brief tribute of gratitude to the memory of him, to whose kindness and hospitality it at once introduced me. He had, for many years, been employed in the diplomatic service of his country, and was, at this time, her Minister at the court of Berlin. Never have the United States been represented abroad by a worthier—rarely, if ever, by a more accomplished—man. In many respects, he was the model of an American diplomatist. A thorough Republican in spirit and in principle, he was as far removed from the temper of the noisy propagandist as from that of the servile courtier. It seemed to be his aim to commend the Free Institutions of his country to the confidence and good-will of the wisest and best—not of the worst—men in the old world. Such was certainly the effect of his influence, official and personal. No intelligent European would ever have inferred from *his* temper or proceedings, that the people of the United States must belong to an inferior grade of civilization. Nor had any American traveller ever occasion to blush for shame, or to utter a patriotic groan, at the name of Henry Wheaton. He never mistook boastful national conceit for democracy; or blustering insolence for patriotism. He was, indeed, an ornament and an honor to his countrymen. His modest dignity, his gentle scholarly manners, his great learning, his large-hearted philanthropy, the child-like purity of his character, and his solid republican virtues, made him an object of sincere respect and affection to all who enjoyed his acquaintance. It is well known that he had the cordial personal esteem of the King and Queen of Prussia; while the illustrious Humboldt, and many other of the most distinguished *savans* and statesmen of Germany, France, and England, were happy to regard him as a friend. His fine literary culture is evinced by the high character of his publications; several of which, if I mistake not, were first written in French. As a publicist, Mr. Wheaton won a European reputation. His works on International Law have taken rank among the weightiest authorities in that science. They are cited as such, not only in our own state-papers, but in the British Parliament, and by foreign cabinets.

What a sad comment upon the essential barbarism of our American "*spoils-system*" is afforded, when its foul and ruthless hand is laid upon such a sensitive, refined, and noble nature as Henry Wheaton's! He recoils and withers under it as at the touch of a poisonous reptile. After twenty years of faithful and eminent labors in the foreign service of the Republic—labors which only fitted him to be still more useful—he is recalled to make way perhaps for some political partisan and student of French, is turned adrift among a new generation, and—his hard-earned reputation used in defence of the international rights and honor of his

gales and safe waves conduct you to the Land of our Forefathers —that Old World of which we have read so much, and upon the dust of whose forgotten generations you will so shortly tread. The very idea of pressing the soil of ancient, mighty Europe—where the human mind has attained the highest cultivation, and the human powers and passions have made their most tremendous developments—fills me with a solemn mysterious awe. What thousands of imprisoned thoughts will be suddenly let loose from the cells of your mind, when you first cast your eyes upon the haughty mistress of arts and science. With what boyish curiosity will you gaze upon the most common objects, and, in spite of reason and knowledge, half wonder to find the trees, the flowers, and even the very earth, so like that you left behind! But I will not tell you what your feelings will be. You must tell them to me, freshly as they arise. Let me impress this one thing upon you—that you cannot write me too often or too minutely of what you see and think. Of advice or counsel I have none to give; I deem you every way capable of judging for yourself. I have the most implicit confidence in your prudence and discretion, and esteem it a high happiness that fortune has made me a trustee to furnish you the means of obtaining, from the best fountains, that knowledge for which you have exhibited so great a thirst. For myself, I hope, in a couple of years, to visit Europe also. In the meantime, I shall pursue my profession, of which I have no right to complain, for it has showered its favors upon me with great profusion. I am already immersed in business, and shall have more than I wish. I mention this to remove from your mind any fears in relation to pecuniary matters. I have no doubt that in two years I shall be able to quit, entirely unembarrassed, and with ample fortune. In the meantime, my affairs are all going on smoothly, and so

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country! Such is the gratitude of party-politics! Mr. Wheaton was a genuine scholar. He delighted in books and in literary conversation. This, joined to his large acquaintance with public affairs, both at home and abroad, rendered his society highly instructive to a young student. I often met him on his solitary walk *Unter den Linden*, and passed many a pleasant evening at his house, the recollection of which is fresh and most grateful still. His name is worthy to be held in lasting remembrance in our American Republic of Letters.—Ed.

soon as these horrible times shall have passed away, my property will be more valuable than before. I shall not come North this summer, but Judge Guion and wife will; they start the last of next month or first of June. Anna will come out with Mrs. G. Again good-bye. God bless and speed you.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *May* 26, 1839.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

Yours of last month has just reached me. What a long, tedious journey it has made! I had become quite alarmed at not hearing from you for such a period. I trust this will find you still at Boston, enjoying yourself in the society of your young friends, and laying up sufficient store of health to last you to Mississippi.

Judge Guion and wife will start in about two weeks, and will be at Portland by the middle of July. You will find it, I doubt not, very pleasant journeying with them. It is not absolutely impossible, though very improbable, that I may come on myself late in the summer. It will depend entirely upon business arrangements. I think you had better come out in the fall by sea. It will be the easiest mode of travelling at that season, and will, I think, be beneficial to you, and Mrs. G., whose health is feeble. I have made Judge Guion promise to take a trip to the White Mountains. You must go and renew your acquaintance with those gems of literature, which sparkle along the road, and which excited our admiration last summer. You will find Judge G. a gentleman of very noble qualities, and of an exceeding kind disposition. He will feel at home with you, and already considers himself as an old acquaintence of the family. I hope he will become acquainted with Little, Fessenden, and other of the intelligent gentlemen of Portland. I should have been delighted to have been at your and Abby's party. When I come home again, we'll have a famous one. I'll have my col-

lar starched, and my hair pomatumed, and for once, be silly, and act the gallant. By that time I shall have rubbed off something of the lion, and trust that I shall not be stared at, like a wild beast just from the desert. By-the-by, I have astonished the people much in these parts, by giving up lionizing. They could hardly believe me in earnest. Poor souls! they have no idea that any one should prefer to be a man rather than a beast. Most people, doubtless, consider me very silly for doing what I consider the wisest act of my life. Very well, I look upon the public as a great fool, and care but little for its opinion, so that we are even in our estimate of each other. However, I ought not to speak harshly of them, for the good idiots have annoyed me with a great deal of politeness and genuine kindness, for all which, as in duty bound, I feel extremely thankful. If I ever have an opportunity for doing them a service, I believe I shall do it. But enough of the public. I am much gratified that mother took a trip to Boston, and that she was so much pleased with it. Now she has broken the ice, I hope she will visit New York. I suppose by the time this reaches you, George will be upon the "dark blue sea," wending his way to the old world. I trust that his anticipations will be realized, and that he will reap both pleasure and profit. I doubt not that he will do so, and in about two years, I shall try the experiment myself. But I am prosing away upon too many subjects, and will save you the trouble of reading a list of my intentions, by giving you the catalogue orally when we meet. Give my respects to Mr. A——, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Washington last winter, and for the kindness of whose family towards you and mother, I feel much bound. May Heaven bless you, my dearest sister, is ever the wish of your affectionate brother

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ABBY.

VICKSBURG, *June* 12, 1839.

DEAR ABBY:—

Since I wrote last, I have been quite busy, and most of the time have been away from home. A few days ago

I was at Port Gibson, where I went to defend a man, who was tried for murder. I was successful in acquitting him. From thence I went to Jackson to attend the Chancery Court, and returned the first of this week. My professional labors are now pretty much over for the summer, though I shall still have abundance of occupation, in preparing and arranging business for next winter. The weather is excessively warm here; indeed, it has been the warmest spring I have ever known. The health of the country is, however, very good. Judge Guion and his wife started about a week ago; but, as they will linger upon the way, I presume this letter will reach you first. I have no doubt they will be much pleased with Portland, and gratified with their visit. I got a letter yesterday from Anna, in which she gave me a very amusing account of her trip up to Boston. Poor girl! she had a sad time of it, and must have suffered excessively. I hope it will not discourage her about coming out this fall. I suppose against this reaches you, she will be at home, and is perhaps looking over your shoulder, while you are reading; if so, tell her I sympathize with her on account of her sufferings both from sea-sickness, and from *old maids*. I trust she has had a pleasant time of it, and that she is improved both in health and spirits. I got a letter from G. to-day, dated upon the eve of his departure for Europe. And he has gone sure enough, and is now half-way across the Atlantic. The only regret I feel in his going, arises from the loss you will sustain, in the want of his society. You will, doubtless, all of you, feel very lonesome for a while, but his letters will soon make some amends for his absence, and I doubt not, when he returns, you will have no cause to regret his visit to the Old Country. Indeed it is an easier trip to go to Europe than to come here, and when Anna gets to Vicksburg, she will have beaten G. as a traveller. Good bye. My love to you all.

Ever your affectionate

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *June 13th*, 1839.

DEAR GEORGE:—

Yours of the 1st inst., announcing your immediate departure, has just been received. I do not know but you were wise in selecting a packet ship. I recommended the Great Western, presuming you would take a steamer, because I think she has been better tested, and is the safest of the class. And so you have at length "laid your hand upon old ocean's mane," and passed that mysterious barrier, which at first view seems to have been intended as a limit to man's enterprise, and a chain upon his insolent ambition; but if so, he has triumphed over the intention of nature, and compelled to his will the vast element, which seemed most independent of him. And how do you feel in the Old World? How does it look? Has age written wrinkles upon its brow, or is it not fairer and more youthful in appearance than that which is called the New? You do right in visiting England, before you go to the Continent. The haughty Island exhibits, without doubt, far beyond any other portion of the world, the results of civilization and the social system, the triumph of arts and arms. Besides, England is our own country, and the bones of our fathers rest in her green bosom. By-the-by, if it should come in your way, I would like to have you make some inquiry in relation to the two branches of our family. The Prentiss branch is, I believe, English, and the Lewis is, as the name indicates, of Welsh origin. This is the whole amount of my genealogical knowledge. It is possible you may meet my friend Mr. Shields somewhere in England or Germany. He will, probably, return to the United States this fall. I trust you may meet him; and then, when he gets back, he can tell me all about you. I have been very busy in my professional business since I came home, but have pretty much disposed of it for the summer. I shall try now and get a few weeks' rest—a thing I very much need. I think, in eighteen months, I shall be able to place my affairs in such a situation as to enable me to quit the practice. This I could do in less time, were it not for the desperate con-

dition of this country at present. There is neither money, credit, nor confidence, and I fear some time will elapse before either is restored. My profession stands me in stead now, and prevents the necessity of sacrificing any of my property. I have just as much business as I wish, or can attend to, and feel myself independent of any contingencies. Judge Gaion and his wife started some ten days since, and will be in Portland about the middle of July. I shall take great delight in Anna's society this winter, and in the spring shall accompany her home, and spend the whole summer at the North. I regret much to hear you speak so seriously of your health, and caution you, by all means, to abstain from sacrificing it by study or sedentary pursuits. If you find the evil continue, take a pedestrian tour through Switzerland, and you will gain knowledge and health both. Much of the most valuable learning cannot be obtained from books, but only from observation and experience. Mingle, therefore, in society as extensively as your inclinations will permit. Explore the different *strata* of humanity, and not confine yourself to the surface. The knowledge of mind can no more be obtained from books alone, than a knowledge of mineralogy. In both cases, you must inspect, not only the precious stones, but the coarse and common materials, if you would become an adept in the science. I have nothing new to tell you, and therefore will not saddle you with a double letter; so, good-bye, and let me hear from you *very often*.

Yours affectionately,

SEARGENT.

Early in the summer of this year, Mr. Prentiss was called upon, by the unanimous and urgent voice of the Whig party of Mississippi, to become their candidate for United States Senator, in place of the Hon. Robert J. Walker, afterwards the distinguished Secretary of the Treasury. This movement on the part of his political friends, was entirely spontaneous—occurred, indeed, while

he was absent from the State—and was known to be in direct hostility to his own inclinations and cherished plans. But no sooner was his name suggested, than the matter was decided by popular acclamation. No choice was left him. It would require a book by itself to record the proceedings and correspondence of public meetings, held in the different counties of the State, to secure, or ratify, his nomination.

The following correspondence will serve as a specimen of the whole :—

NATCHEZ, *July* 16, 1839.

HON. S. S. PRENTISS.

SIR :—A meeting of the citizens of Adams County, unexampled in its magnitude and respectability, held in this city on Monday, the 15th inst., have delegated us to address you, and make known their unanimous wish, that you would consent to become a candidate for the Senate of the United States.

We know that it is your desire to retire from the scenes of public life; but we confidently believe, that when the voice of your fellow-citizens is heard, you will, however reluctantly as regards yourself, accede to their request.

The present is no ordinary period in our State and national history. Demagogues, as destitute of principle as of reason, are stirring up the elements of strife, and endeavoring to array one portion of the community against another, and, in the mask of friendship, are showing themselves by their insidiousness to be the sworn enemies of the people and their liberties. The citizens of this county opposed to their vile machinations, and the whole train of the insane and corrupt measures of the present Administration, call upon you to consult the public welfare and the cause of our country. They appeal to your well-known patriotism and tried political firmness, and hope that at this eventful crisis you will, as heretofore, be ready to sacrifice personal considerations to the demands of public duty.

Trusting that your views on this important subject may

coincide with those of your fellow-citizens, with the utmost respect,

We remain, yours, &c.

Wm. St. Jno. Elliot,	Jas. C. Wilkins,
Grafton Baker,	W. C. Conner,
S. Murchison,	Sam'l. Cotton,
Chas. A. Lacoste,	Sam'l. B. Newman,
P. L. Mitchell,	Alex. Montgomery,
C. Rawlings,	Thos. Henderson,
P. H. McGraw,	S. H. B. Black,
H. W. Huntington,	Mark Izod,
F. Beaumont,	Elias Ogden,
Levin Covington,	J. T. Griffith.

Vicksburg, *Aug.* 16, 1839.

Gentlemen:—

I was honored several days since by the receipt of your favor of the 16th ultimo, informing me of the proceedings of a meeting of the citizens of Adams County, requesting to know whether I will consent to become a candidate for the Senate of the United States. Severe indisposition will, I trust, afford a sufficient excuse for the delay which has occurred in responding to your kind and flattering communication.

My ambition never suggested to me the idea of seeking the high station to which the partial consideration of a portion of my fellow-citizens has recently called my attention. I know well the responsibility which devolves upon the representative of a sovereign and independent State, and that mature experience and ample capacity are requisite in the council-chamber of the Senate. If, then, I should seem to disregard these qualifications by acceding to your wishes, a portion of the blame which attaches to my presumption will properly belong to those who excited it. Whatever may have been my private views and intentions, I do not hesitate to abandon them at the desire of those with whom I have so long been laboring in a great and

holy cause. I hold the contest in which we are engaged, no less important than that which achieved our liberties. The tyranny of corruption is more dangerous and more galling than the tyranny of arms; and defeat in defence of the principles of our Fathers, if we have performed our duty, is not less glorious, nor less honorable, than the death of the patriot upon a well-fought battle-field.

Without hesitation, then, I will frankly say, that my services are at the command of the State, though I did not consider them of sufficient importance, ever to have tendered them voluntarily. Having already responded, at some length, upon the same subject, to my fellow-citizens in another portion of the State, I do not deem it necessary, at present, to go into a discussion of political matters. I cannot conclude, however, without an expression of my deep gratification at the unimpaired confidence of my fellow-citizens of Adams, most of whom I am proud to call not only political, but personal friends. Will you please to tender to them assurances of my most grateful regard; and for yourselves, gentlemen, most of whose names are familiar to me as household words, accept my thanks for the kind manner in which you have performed your duty, together with my best wishes for your individual happiness.

Very respectfully,

Your friend, and fellow-citizen,

S. S. Prentiss.

The letter above referred to was addressed to the Whigs of Madison County.* It is as follows :—

* It would be aside from our purpose to go into an exposition of the great financial controversy touched upon in this letter, and which sprung out of Gen. Jackson's war upon the United States Bank and Mr. Van Buren's Sub-Treasury Scheme. But the reader, who is inclined to examine the subject, will find it fully discussed, and the arguments on both sides unfolded with masterly ability, in the fourth volume of Webster's *Works;* in the second volume of Clay's *Life and Speeches* (Mallory's edition); and in the third volume of Calhoun's *Speeches*. The Messages of Gen. Jackson and Mr. Van Buren, as also the speeches of Col. Benton, Mr. Legare, and Silas Wright—not to mention others—might also be consulted

VICKSBURG, *Aug.* 10, 1839.

GENTLEMEN:—

I have been honored by the receipt of your letter of the 29th of June, transmitting to me a copy of the proceedings of the Whigs of Madison County, at a public meeting held by them, "for the purpose of recommending a candidate to succeed the Hon. R. J. Walker in the Senate of the United States."

My own nomination for that office of high honor and trust was entirely unexpected, and at once gratified and perplexed me. I am not insensible to that ambition which seeks the good opinion of others, and is gratified by its exhibition, even when colored by kind partiality and friendly prejudice. That the Whigs of Madison deem me worthy of occupying a seat in the highest deliberative body on earth, has not failed to awaken the most grateful emotions. But I was perplexed as to the course proper for me to pursue. I had never indulged the vanity of supposing that my services could be of sufficient importance to require my continuance in political life any longer than my inclinations prompted. Accordingly, after mature reflection, I long since determined to abandon, at the earliest opportunity, all participation, except as a private citizen, in political affairs; in the contests of which, even my limited observation had discovered imbecility too frequently pass for capacity, hypocrisy for candor, and cold-hearted selfishness for ardent and disinterested patriotism. Political science has become, for the most part, the science of deception. Not only are the dictates of reason and experience set at naught, but facts themselves defied. Physical truths, no less than moral, which have for ages been considered impregnable, fall like beleaguered cities before the cunning devices of modern political warfare. The mausoleum of history affords no protection for the remains of the past. Political sorcery evokes from them foul spirits which never actuated or controlled their existence—and the events of a former age are

to advantage. It is a pity that no collection of Mr. Wright's speeches has yet appeared. He was one of the most distinguished leaders of the Democratic party, and well deserved such a memorial.

compelled to bear false witness before the present. What happened yesterday is denied to-day, and plain, modest truth is stared out of countenance by audacious mendacity. The conclusion, therefore, is not to be wondered at, that in these dark and corrupt times, private happiness and public service are incompatible.

Both inclination and private interest forbade me to abandon my cherished and rapidly maturing plans of future life, and admonished me of the rashness of again plunging among the wild breakers of public opinion, where the bark that moves straight forward is almost sure to be swamped, while the tacking and veering craft, by adapting itself to each sudden change of wind and wave, gains the port in safety. On the other hand, I could not forget the obligations which bind me to our beloved State—obligations that shall never call upon me in vain, when they point out a mode by which I can liquidate any portion of the heavy claim Mississippi justly holds against me. Neither was I regardless of the gratitude due to the Whigs for the bold, untiring, and successful warfare which they have waged against the party in power; a party under the baneful influence of whose destructive theories and corrupt practices the prosperity of this great nation has withered and died. Above all, I remembered with pride and exultation that the Whigs of Mississippi had preserved the honor of the State, when the opposite party, Esau-like, was bargaining it away for a mess of political pottage. They, and they alone, are entitled to the immortal praise of having warded off the first traitorous blow aimed at the elective franchise. It was beneath their stern response that the servile tools of the President shrunk abashed, and it was upon their mandate they surrendered the rich jewel they had stolen.

Me the Whigs have already honored far beyond my humble deserts, and in retiring from political contests, I did not doubt that I should be succeeded by those who would, with equal zeal and ampler capacity, fight the great battle of principle.

I hesitated, therefore, on receiving your communication, not from any question of my duty in sacrificing private and personal considerations to the success of the good cause, but from fears

lest the partialities of my friends in Madison had betrayed them into an injudicious selection. From the subsequent action of the Whigs in other parts of the State, however, I have been forced to the conclusion, that, whether judiciously or not, they are desirous of placing me in nomination. Being convinced of this fact from the proceedings of various public meetings, as well as from the general expression of the Whig press, I do not hesitate any longer in placing myself in the hands of my political friends, with the distinct understanding, that inasmuch as I accede to their wishes, not from motives of personal aggrandizement, but from a sincere desire to do my duty to the country, so my name shall be at once withdrawn from nomination, should subsequent observation indicate, as it very probably will, some more appropriate candidate.

The reasonable license of an epistle will hardly admit of an extended exposition of political doctrines; nor, indeed, do I consider it the most desirable channel for their inculcation. Neither do I deem it requisite for me, on the present occasion, to go into any labored disquisition upon subjects which I have had the good fortune to discuss before the people at large, in almost every county of the State. I need only say that my opinions in relation to the present Administration, and its measures, have been greatly fortified by the observation and experience of the last year. The developments which have been made in relation to the conduct of the financial affairs of the government, have astonished and shocked the whole nation. It is now a matter not of mere surmise or partisan invective, but of solemn demonstration, based upon admitted and undeniable facts—facts investigated, vouched for, and published under the deliberate sanction of the popular branch of Congress—that the Treasury department is rotten to the core; that it is but the pander to executive power, and exercises its high functions, not for the good of the country, but of party; not honestly, for the general welfare, but wickedly and corruptly for the most sinister purposes. Since Mr. Van Buren ascended the chair of state, it has exhibited a system of peculation and connivance unprecedented in any government. The correspondence between its

chief and his subordinates is offensive to the moral sense, and insulting to the intelligence of the people. Its open and unblushing profligacy would have shocked even the loose notions of that most venal of ministers, Sir Robert Walpole, whose political maxim was, that "*every man has his price.*" Corruption has been traced, not merely to the doors, but into the very recesses of the temple. By the footprints upon the floor we have discovered, as did the Chaldeans of old, that the rich offerings laid by the people upon the shrine, have been carried away and consumed, not by the god, but by the *juggling priests.*

Under ordinary circumstances, and in ordinary times, the developments to which I allude would have prostrated any administration, however powerful. Unfortunately the deep distress which has pervaded the country, and spread dismay and ruin through all the avenues of business, has in some degree withdrawn the eyes of the people from these great enormities, and directed them with melancholy earnestness to their own private sufferings. Thus the rude blow which the robber bestows with one hand diverts the attention for a moment from the theft he is committing with the other.

But corruption is by no means the only remarkable characteristic of the party in power. Out of the very ruin its measures have brought upon the country, does it contrive to extract political capital. With unblushing effrontery, its partisans assert that it is not accountable for the results of its own action; that the distresses of the country have been produced by the operation of Whig principles, and all the responsibility lies at the doors of the opposition. The unfortunate patient, who, from a state of perfect health has been reduced by the nostrums of the quack to the point of death, is gravely told by the ignorant pretender that his wretched condition is not owing to the nauseous doses he has taken, but is entirely attributable to his former physician, whose prescription he has discarded for years. A grosser insult was never offered to the good sense of an intelligent people.

The party in power is solely responsible for the sufferings under which the country is still laboring. Its mad and licentious

schemes destroyed the best currency in the world, and gave us, instead, the present bloated, miserable system, whose sickly and convulsive action impedes every step of enterprise, and paralyzes the hand of industry. One of those schemes has been a systematic and diabolical attempt to destroy all confidence, public or private. The vilest slanders against the institutions and capacities of the country have been everywhere promulgated, until the eye of distrustful suspicion is glaring with baneful influence over the whole land. Credit, the child of confidence and the nurse of enterprise, has shared the fate of its parent. The currents of business have been rudely diverted, and now creep lazily along through choked and tortuous channels.

During the existence of a United States Bank, the mixed currency of paper and precious metals performed to admiration all its appropriate functions. At present, it is totally inadequate to the fulfillment of its duty as a medium of domestic commerce, or for the transaction of the most ordinary affairs of business.

When Gen. Jackson determined upon the destruction of that Bank, he did not, nor did his partisans then, deny that it afforded a sound circulating medium, and constituted a cheap and efficient channel through which to conduct the exchanges of the country. He promised, however, that all these functions would be as well fulfilled by the State Banks, which he said were entirely adequate to that purpose. He proposed to dispense with this great wheel, on the express ground that it added neither power nor certainty to the machine—that the system was perfect without it. Experience has exposed what reason strove in vain to do, the utter fallacy of Gen. Jackson's view on this subject. It was always strenuously opposed by the Whigs, and is at length entirely abandoned by the other party. The Whigs predicted, that in the absence of a National Bank, each State would endeavor, through its own incorporations, to seize the largest control of the currency; that thus a great number of weak and jealous systems would be thrown in rude collision; and the common good of the people entirely lost sight of, in the clashing interests of a thousand institutions, mutually hostile to each other, incapable of aggregate action, and individually incompetent for any but local purposes.

Our predictions have been verified to the letter. So far, the State Bank system has proved a failure. All now admit its total incompetency, under its present organization and mode of operation, for furnishing a sound and uniform currency, or for carrying on the exchanges of the country.

But its original advocates as a national system, instead of honestly acknowledging their error, and returning with us to that excellent path, from whence in an evil hour they strayed, with their characteristic modesty deny that they ever advocated the system, and not only repudiate their own paternity, but boldly lay their illegitimate offspring at the door of the Whigs.

In other countries ministers are responsible for measures, and upon their success depends the stability of the administration.—Here, it seems, those out of power are held amenable for the malpractices and failures of those who wield it; and we are charged not only with their unwise acts, but with their worn out and discarded opinions. At all events, both parties acknowledge the inefficiency of the present system, and the necessity of a change. The party in power clearly indicates its intention to wage a war of extermination against its old allies the State Banks, and aims at the establishment upon their ruins of the sub-treasury system. In our own State this is openly avowed. Taking advantage of the well-founded indignation of the people against the miserable system, which they themselves fostered into existence, and which is now pressing like an incubus upon the State, the friends of the Administration have long since commenced a fierce crusade against all sorts of banking, State or National. All bank paper currency is repudiated by them, and banks, no matter how honestly conducted, denounced in the most unmeasured terms, not only as anti-republican, but also, in the language of one of their distinguished leaders, as aiming, "a fatal blow at private morality and at public virtue, and as a consequence, destructive of all pure and sincere religion."

On the other hand, the Whigs are desirous of *reforming*, not of *destroying*, the paper money system. They believe the plan of an exclusive gold and silver currency, not only absurd, but in this country impracticable. They advocate a mixed currency of

coin, and bank paper convertible into coin at the will of the holder. They believe the present State Bank system incapable of producing such a result; but in conjunction with a United States Bank, they know its entire competency for the purpose.

The Whigs are therefore in favor of establishing a National Bank, independent of executive influence, but under strict accountability to the representatives of the people. They are in favor of such an institution, simply because they see no other mode of attaining their object, which is a sound and uniform currency.

The sub-treasury scheme which is set up as the antagonist of a United States Bank, does not even propose to produce such a result, but modestly assumes its sole function to be, the collection and disbursement of the public revenues.

If this be the extent of the measure, its adoption by no means dispenses with the necessity of a National Bank, for the collection and disbursement of the revenues would constitute but a small portion of the functions of such an institution. If, on the other hand, it is intended, as it doubtless is, that the sub-treasury shall furnish a paper currency, in the shape of its drafts and checks, then it will constitute, to all intents and purposes, a Government Bank, under the control of the executive; what the Whigs, of all things, most fear and abhor.

I am therefore opposed to the sub-treasury scheme, not only on account of its intrinsic and essential defects as a financial system, but also because it proposes, in its selfish policy, to protect the government and not the people, and professes to confine its benefits entirely to the former.

I believe the people of the United States require, and are entitled from some source, to a good, sound and convenient currency. I do not believe gold and silver alone can furnish it. I do not believe the State Banks alone can furnish it. I do believe the object can be accomplished by the charter of a National Bank, and that Congress has the constitutional power to grant such a charter. Sooner or later the people will compel them to do it. The present system of things cannot be submitted to much longer. Tirades against banks and credit, may for a

moment tickle the ear, but they afford no relief to the sufferings of an outraged and betrayed community. The people have been waiting long enough for relief from the measures of the dominant party. They are now looking in another quarter. They demand some better argument against a National Bank than the pious apprehensions of the advocates of the sub-treasury; and a better model for the conduct of their affairs, than the *Island of Cuba*, that colonial vassal of the worst governed nation on earth.

It is in vain to talk, even if the thing were desirable, of eradicating all the State Banks; it could be effected only by a surrender, on the part of all the States, of the power to charter such institutions. To suppose this surrender will be made, is absurd. Even should it, the present generation could not attain the proposed object. The larger portion of the banks now in existence in the United States are protected by the sanctity of contract and shielded by the strong arm of the Constitution. A majority of them cannot be got rid of without their own consent, unless the people see fit to follow the advice of certain desperate partisans of the Administration, and suppress them by physical force.

I do not apprehend that my countrymen will follow such wicked counsel. I take it then for granted, that in some shape or other, the banking system will continue to exist, at least during our generation. This being the case, the refusal to establish a National Bank will not relieve the country from the curse, as some are pleased to term it, of a paper currency. All the evils which can possibly be predicated of a National Bank, with many more, are likely to result from the present system, while the latter is incapable of affording, but in a very small degree, the facilities and advantages of the former.

The most frequently urged, and most popular objection to a National Bank, is that which is deduced from its power. It is said, that a Mammoth Institution of this sort, with a capital of fifty millions, would be able not only to control the currency, but through that, to regulate by its expansions and contractions, the prices both of labor and property; that thus the whole community would be involved in its meshes, and so it

would prove at the same time dangerous to the government, and fatal to the liberties of the people. But, though the experience of the past ought to quiet all honest apprehensions of this sort, yet even supposing them reasonable, I would ask, are not the same dangers more imminent under the present system? The State Banks now present the spectacle of a large number of petty independent chiefs, waging war upon each other. The stronger overcome the weaker, and the contest goes on until some one wiser and more powerful than the rest, reduces all to subjection, and rules over them with despotic sway. The State Banks even now are weary of the ruinous strife, and anxious to place themselves under the protection of some institution sufficiently powerful to sustain them. Many have already sworn allegiance to the great Bank of Pennsylvania. Others are ready to follow the example; but the greater portion are anxiously awaiting the final determination of the people, whether they shall submit to the control of a National or a mere State institution. Around the former they would all rally, and acting with confidence and concert, the immediate result would be a sound and uniform currency, and a restored and healthy credit. It is worthy of observation, that some of the very States, which object to the chartering by Congress of a National Bank, lest it should prove too powerful for the country, very modestly propose to charter similar institutions at home for the purpose of affording a currency, not only for themselves, but for their neighbors. This has been already accomplished by Pennsylvania. Her Mammoth Institution is in full operation, beyond our reach or control, and yet with all the capacity for evil that could be attributed to a National Bank by its most bitter opponent. Its issues, at this very moment, command a premium in this State over gold and silver. Our exchanges, such as they are, are principally under its control. What could prevent this institution, with her immense credit and capital, from saturating the whole country, if she pleased, with her issues? she could emit her hundreds of millions, and it would all be grasped at; she could then contract this unnatural expansion, call in the paper, and, according to the argument of those opposed to a National

Bank, purchase at half price from a bankrupt community the property of the country. If such a power must exist, let it be under the control and supervision of the whole people, and not of a single State. But this is the beginning only. Other States, emulous of this power, are preparing to struggle for a share in it. Look at the great South Carolina Railroad Bank, already chartered in several States, and determined, no doubt, to seize the control and regulation of the currency of the South.

Look at the idea, long since thrown out, and now ripe for action, of a fifty million bank in the city of New York. Is not the currency of Mississippi already at the mercy of other States? Shall we continue to groan under this degrading vassalage? Which will Mississippi prefer as the regulator of her currency and exchanges, a bank chartered by a single State, in the construction and limitations of which she has no voice, and in the supervision and control of which she has no power; or one chartered by Congress, in every provision of which her voice will be heard, in every limitation her suggestions considered, and over the conduct and operations of which she will in common with the other States, exercise a continual supervision and control? The question now submitted to the people is, whether the currency of the country shall be restored and regulated through the action of the representatives of all the States, or by the legislation and moneyed power of a single State? I regret that the limits of this communication will not permit me to enter more at large upon this view of the financial question; I trust, however, I have thrown out sufficient hints on the subject to attract attention, and to constitute a starting point for reflection. But I have already exceeded the boundaries I had prescribed. If the people shall see fit, through their representatives, to elevate me to the high and arduous station towards which your kind wishes have pointed, I can only say that for the fidelity of my future service, I offer them the guaranty of the past. To my fellow citizens of Madison whom you represent, as well as to the Whigs of other sections of the State who have honored me with their unexpected and unsought confidence, allow me to express my most sincere and grateful acknowledgments. That

I may ever prove worthy of their good opinion is my highest desire; that I may be able, in even the smallest degree, to advance our common principles, is my sole ambition. To yourselves, gentlemen, permit me to present my thanks, together with my best wishes for your individual prosperity.

Very respectfully,

Your obd't servant,

S. S. PRENTISS.

To Messrs.
T. J. CATCHINGS,
J. H. ROLLINS,
C. C. SHACKELFORD,
JNO. MONTGOMERY,
WM. W. HAYDEN.
} *Committee.*

The following letter from one of Mr. Prentiss' most honored and admired friends, then a United States Senator from Kentucky, will show the interest felt in this election, beyond the bounds of Mississippi :—

FRANKFORT, *Sept.* 1, 1839.

MR DEAR SIR:—

In a Vicksburg newspaper sent me by some friend, I read yesterday your reply to the public calls made upon you to become a candidate for the Senate of the United States.

I rejoice at the conclusion to which you have come, and have enjoyed a proud and high satisfaction in the eloquent, manly, and masterly style and tone of your response.

Peculiar circumstances marked your entrance into Congress, and contributed to make you at once an object of distinguished interest and attention to the whole nation. In Congress, for the brief period of your service, you did more than sustain the high expectations of the public, and your retirement has continued to be regarded as a misfortune to the country. And, moreover, it has been considered as involving in its consequences, the loss of your State to the Whig cause.

The opinion prevails, almost universally among the Whigs,

that the course of Mississippi depends on you. A great exigency has arisen, and you are recalled to the field of action, for a struggle full of consequence to yourself and to the country. Mississippi, of all the States, votes last for members to the House of Representatives, and it is quite probable that it may depend on her vote whether the Whigs shall have a majority or not, in that body. If they can have it at all without you, it must be a bare precarious majority, liable to be prostrated at any time, by the weakness, timidity, or venality of any two or three of its members. It is not necessary to exaggerate the importance of the crisis. The fate of this Administration, in all human probability, will be determined by the Whigs having a majority in the next House of Representatives,—an efficient majority. That depends on the course of Mississippi, and the course of Mississippi depends on you and your exertions; so, at least, it is confidently believed by the country. And that belief fixes your position, and elevates you to a station of exalted, perilous, honorable reponsibility. Circumstances have placed you there, and you cannot avoid it—you have no escape but by victory. If the difficulty, the labor, the peril of the contest, are great, great will be the honors of the victory. And they will be all your own. The people have awarded them to you, in advance. If the Whigs are defeated in your State, the country will say, "Prentiss could have prevented this";—if they are successful, the country will say, "Prentiss has done this." This I tell you as the state of public opinion, and such will be its sentence. I do not wish to flatter you, but as a friend, speaking from his convictions, who would warn you of your true position, and its high responsibility. You may consider it a hard lot—a hard lot, to be called from the enjoyment of the political fame you have already won, to new and arduous struggles in the public cause. In some respects, it is a hard lot, but in others it is an enviable one, "worth ten years of peaceful life." It is no common, vulgar, political strife, to which you are called, but a great occasion for patriotic devotion and sacrifice. It is in this point of view that you, I am sure, have regarded it, and it is in that view that the subject is exactly calculated to stir up the spirit that is in you.

The Administration knows that it stands on the brink of destruction. It knows the importance of your State to its cause; and it will put forth all its means, all its patronage, all its influence, to carry your elections. You will have to combat all this, and to guard against all possible tricks and frauds that can be practised by its adherents. The odds are fearful against you, but the more will be the joy and honor of the victory. You must gird up your loins as for a great battle. You will have to go forth from county to county, filling up the hearts of your friends with your own enthusiasm, and *persuading* your enemies to their own good. Consider it, if you please, as the last of your battles, but make it memorable as such.

I declare to you, that I do not feel more concern about the public importance of your elections, than I do about their personal consequences to you. How I shall like to hail you as victor in that contest!

Pardon me for troubling you with this long letter. I could not restrain myself from writing you. May all good spirits tend on you, and guide you to success.

Your Friend,

J. J. CRITTENDEN.

P. S.—If you have leisure, write me a line; but I had rather know that your activity in the cause, was such as not to leave you a single moment for any such purpose.

J. J. C.

S. S. PRENTISS, ESQ.

A gentleman of political note writes him about the same time from Philadelphia:—"Your retirement has produced universal regret in this quarter of the Union. You cannot dream, even in your most enthusiastic moments, of a tithe of the reputation you enjoy here for eloquence and patriotism. If you were in the field, no one would doubt for a moment of the success of the Whigs of Mississippi. Can you not, as it is, take the stump and urge forward the good cause?"

But, notwithstanding such appeals as these, and notwithstanding the enthusiasm with which the nomination was hailed, his letters show plainly that his heart was not in the work. Still he conducted the canvass with great vigor, though under serious disadvantages, growing out of the pressure of his private business. Wherever he went, he was received with all the honors of a prince ; Whigs and Democrats, men and women, alike flocked to see and hear him. His speeches were exceedingly able and impressive, full of political thought, observation, and keen, caustic wit ; but there was no malice in them.

"My warfare with the Hon. Senator," he said in reference to his opponent, "is purely political and shall be conducted on my part with legitimate weapons ; no poisoned shaft has or ever shall fly from my bow. Politically I make war upon him to the utmost of my strength, because I believe his present principles are pernicious, and tend to the ruin of the country. Personally, as he well knows, I have never entertained towards him other than kind and friendly sentiments."

In the letter from which the above is taken, he thus refers to the renewed charge that at the dinner to Mr. Webster in Faneuil Hall, he had expressed too much respect for the talents and public services of that eminent statesman :—

As an American citizen, who has rendered himself illustrious, and added character to his country and his race, I am proud of Mr. Webster. I sincerely pity that littleness of soul, which will not do justice even to the merits of an enemy, and which looks with bitter envy upon the greatness it cannot reach. I know Mr. Webster's name is unpopular in this State, and I have already said that as a politician I differ from him in many things radically ; yet let me tell the Hon. Senator

that Mr. Webster's name will be prominent in the history of distinguished Americans, long after the honorable Senator and myself shall find a registry only on the scroll of oblivion.

The following passage of the same letter, deserves to be quoted :—

Our present banking system is bad, but that shall not prevent me from advocating a good one. I do not choose because men sometimes die of depletion, or are choked by their food, on that account to abstain from eating. Steamboats frequently blow up, yet I choose to travel on them in preference to going a foot.

The Hon. Senator quotes the sentiments expressed in my letter to the Whigs of Madison county, where I speak of the larger portion of the banks of the United States as protected by the sanctity of contract, and calls them 'anti-republican and anti-constitutional.' My proposition is, that the larger portion of the banks in the United States cannot be got rid of without their own consent, because they are protected by the Constitution. In most of the States those which have forfeited their charters, have had them restored, and of course will be sustained in their rights by the courts. I consider a bank charter a contract, and hold the Legislature bound by by it, until it is surrendered or forfeited; and on the question of forfeiture it is the province of the judicial and not the legislative department to decide. I deny the right of the Legislature to abrogate at their pleasure, the charters granted by previous Legislatures. I understand the Hon. Senator to advance the doctrine, that whenever the Legislasure thinks that a bank is not of as much service to the public as was anticipated at its creation, it has a right to abrogate and repeal its charter. Now, if this be his opinion, he is more radical and destructive than I had ever thought him. The proposition that the Legislature can repeal and take away charters without the intervention of the Judiciary, is, to my mind, a doctrine the most mischievous and dangerous that can be

imagined; it strikes at the very root of our system of Government. With regard to the banks of this State, I think it probable that most of them have forfeited their charters;—if so, let the proper proceedings take place against them, through the courts of the country, and then we shall get rid of a great evil, without violating the first principles of our social system.

Had the choice of Senator been made by direct vote of the people, he would, perhaps, have been chosen. "There never was a time," says Mr. Word, "during Mr. Prentiss' residence in Mississippi, when he could not, in my opinion, have carried the popular vote of the State." But the election turned upon the political complexion of the Legislature, and as—owing in part to local divisions among the Whigs, and the running of double tickets—a majority of that body were Democrats, Mr. Walker was rechosen Senator. It was, no doubt, a most fortunate result for Mr. Prentiss in every point of view, and he himself as will appear from his letters, so regarded it. His private affairs were already sufficiently entangled; six years more of political life would have been his utter ruin. And yet what a noble theatre would the Senate of the United States have afforded for the exercise of his splendid abilities! How would he have shone there among the intellectual magnates of the land! He once told me, that in the event of his election, he had resolved to make the development of a broader and deeper sentiment of *nationality* the special object of his senatorial career. Various causes, theoretical and practical, of domestic and foreign growth, were in operation, as he believed, to injure the tone and mar the integrity of this fundamental sentiment—a sentiment upon which reposes, in no small degree, the majestic structure of our Free Institutions. He deemed it, therefore, a primary duty of an American statesman, to foster the

ancestral spirit of the nation; to invigorate the old *amor patriæ;* to cultivate mutual good will among the different sections of the Union, and, in every possible way, to strengthen the bonds of love and fidelity to the whole country. He thought that unless those moral feelings which bind a people together, and make them of the same mind and of one spirit—such as brotherly kindness, charity, and loyal patriotic self-devotion—were cherished among us with especial care, the anti-national tendencies, already referred to, were likely in the end to bring disaster and wreck upon the Republic. One cannot resist the wish that he had enjoyed the opportunity of setting forth his views on this great subject, in the presence of the Nation. With what manly eloquence and genial fervid emotion he would have done it! *Sed aliter dis visum.*

We now return to his correspondence:

TO HIS MOTHER.

VICKSBURG, *August* 6, 1839.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I have been absent the last three or four weeks, and was very much gratified on my return to find your kind letter. It is a long while since you wrote me, and therefore I was more pleased than if it had been from one of the girls; though it is, I need not say, one of my greatest pleasures to receive their kind epistles. I have been to New Orleans, whither I was called on business, and from thence went across the lake to a place upon the Gulf of Mexico, called Pass Christian—a place much resorted to in the summer, and very pleasant. I enjoyed myself much this little trip—though I suffered exceedingly from the heat, which has been this summer more oppressive than I have ever before known it. Since my return, I find the Whigs have been holding public meetings throughout the State, and have determined to run me as a candidate for the United States Senate, in place of Mr. Walker, the present mem-

ber. You know I had resolved to have nothing further to do with politics; but so strong have been the solicitations addressed to me, that I have been compelled to consent. The election takes place this winter, and I think the chances about equal. If not elected, I shall feel no disappointment, for I have seen as much of public life as I wish. If elected, it will certainly be a very high honor, and one which seldom falls upon a person of my age. The term of service is six years. The whole movement has been very unexpected to me. I see by the Portland papers, that Judge Guion and family have arrived, and are, of course, now with you. I hope they will have a pleasant time, and that Mrs. G.'s health will be improved by the journey. I cannot possibly hear anything against Anna's returning with them. I have set my heart upon it, and would not it should fall through on any account. I have the strongest confidence, that a winter here will have the most beneficial effect upon her health; and besides, I cannot think of losing the pleasure which I expect to to derive from her society.

I suppose you have heard from George by this time. I am in expectation of letters from him by the Great Western, which I perceive has arrived in New York, and must have left England after his arrival there. I see by a letter of Judge G.'s, from New York, that W. was to accompany him to Portland. You will have quite a family this summer, though it will be sufficiently pleasant to compensate for the trouble. I was very much gratified that you and Abby had such a pleasant trip to Brunswick, and enjoyed yourselves so much while there. As travelling seems to agree with you so well, you should try it oftener than you have done. Next summer I expect to make you a good long visit, and we must think of some excursions to take then. Notwithstanding the extreme warmth of the weather, the health of Vicksburg, and indeed of the whole country, is excellent. Tell Judge Guion that all things are well here, and that I shall write him in a day or two. My love to you all.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ABBY.

VICKSBURG, *Sept.* 15, 1839.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I have received your letter of the 18th ult., and as I have been rather negligent of late, will try to redeem myself by answering it immediately. The fact is, I have been very little at home this summer, and have had so much business to distract my attention, that I have had, frequently, to postpone for weeks my intention of writing. But though I have been somewhat negligent in this respect, yet not a day passes in which you do not all occupy much of my thoughts, and contribute largely to my happiness. Indeed, I can say truly that my intercourse with the world, and the active duties which it has imposed upon me, so far from diminishing, have every day increased my love and attachment for our little family circle. I hope the day is not far distant when I shall be able to express it in person, and not by mere scribbling. I am tired of this kind of life, and long to quit it. Yet I am now engaged in an exciting political contest, am a candidate for the United States Senate, and have been, for several weeks, attending public dinners, barbacues, &c. &c.—making speeches, and laboring, as for dear life, in a matter in which, personally, I feel no interest whatever. I do not want to go to the Senate; it will break up all my plans of life, and compel me to pursue a vocation which I almost detest. I have consented to run only from a sense of duty.

The Whig party in this State have called upon me, with almost unexampled enthusiasm, to assist them in the contest, and I could not conscientiously refuse. I have received the kindest personal treatment, not only from them, but from my political opponents. There is nothing personally unpleasant in the matter, but I am disgusted with politics, and annoyed at the notoriety which has attached to my name. Fortunately, there is a very good chance of my being beaten, and though I shall do my utmost to prevent it, yet I shall, I believe, feel gratified if it happens. You may laugh at this, but it is true. For my poli-

tical friends, I shall do everything in my power; and for my political principles I am willing to make any sacrifice; but if, after all this, I am defeated, I do not doubt it will add to our mutual happiness by enabling me to withdraw for ever from politics. So, if you hear of my defeat, do not regret it, but congratulate me and yourselves upon it as a fortunate result. So much for politics. Now for more interesting matters. I am beginning to expect the arrival of Anna, with Judge G. and family. I understand they are in Lexington, Ky.; though I have not heard a word from them directly since they left Portland. But I have seen several gentlemen who have met them, and report they are all in good health. You cannot conceive how much pleasure I expect to derive from A.'s society this winter. Every moment I can spare from business I shall devote to her comfort and happiness; and I hope to return her in the spring improved in health, and without regret that she has yielded to my solicitations to visit this distant country. You and mother must not entertain the slightest apprehensions on her account, for I should deem it an imputation upon me. She will be under the protection of a brother who loves his sisters better than he does himself. I will be mother, sister, and brother to her. You shall hear from me a true account of her health, and everything of interest in relation to her journey and visit. I am in good health, though annoyed almost to death by business and politics. You mention that you have received no answer from me to mother's letter. It is strange; I received her kind and affectionate letter, and answered it immediately. If it has not been received, it must have miscarried. I will write again, so soon as Anna arrives, which I hope will be in a few days. I have had two letters from G., long and interesting. He is enjoying himself much. My love to you all. I am afraid you and mother will be lonesome this winter; but you mustn't get low spirited. We shall be all with you next summer.

Your affectionate brother,

S. S. Prentiss.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Sept.* 25, 1839.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I am afraid you will complain of my neglect during the summer; but the fact is, I have been absent most of the time, and besides, did not know where a letter would reach you. I wrote once, soon after you left, directing to London. I received, a few days since, yours of the 19th of July, upon the eve of your leaving London for Berlin. I thank you very heartily for your epistle. It was a good long one, and gratified me much. Your own feelings and opinions in regard to men and things are much more desired by me than the mere descriptions of others. You are pursuing the right plan, not only for my gratification, but for your own improvement. Nothing is more useful to a young man than the expression of his opinions, fresh as they arise. It gives an independence of thought, which cannot be attained, except by the habit of frequent expression, either in conversation or writing. I was very much pleased with your description of the distinguished men of Parliament and of the pen whom you had the opportunity of hearing. I am inclined to agree with you in relation to Brougham. He has too much versatility of talent for my idea of a man who is to become the land-mark of his age. This may seem paradoxical, but the chronicles of the past will show that most men who have made an indelible impression upon the race, have concentrated their energies, and confined them in a single channel. Diffusion weakens no less in mental than in physical power. "The Admirable Crichton" could not have become a Napoleon, a Milton, or a Shakespeare. Lord Brougham is too much of an Admirable Crichton for my taste. I am afraid your visit to England has made you aristocratic, from the way you talk of the Government of the little Queen, and of the Reformers. However, I do not pretend to judge of the correctness of your criticism on the latter. Most reformers in politics are actuated by selfish motives, and, as a class, I have little confidence in them. Substantial improvement is generally of slow

growth, both in morals and physics, while what is commonly called Reform, attempts to attain its object suddenly and without regard to consequences. But you will probably prefer hearing something more about me than my abstractions. I am now one of the most practical and busiest of men. I am engaged in building extensively upon my property in town, have my attention occupied by a large amount of private and professional business, and, in addition to all this, am a candidate for the United States Senate, at the election which takes place this winter. You will, doubtless, be surprised at this latter piece of information, as I had, publicly as well as privately, announced my determination not to re-engage in political strife. I have been compelled, sorely against my inclinations, to forego this determination. The Whigs of the State held public meetings in almost every county, calling upon me to permit my name to be run. So universal was the expression of my political friends, that I felt it a clear matter of duty to accede to their wishes. I am accordingly in the field, and busily engaged in the various responsibilities of a political leader. I have been invited to many public dinners and barbacues, which I attend when practicable, and address the people. My opponent, Mr. Walker, has made no speeches as yet, but he writes letters as long as the Mediterranean. The contest is doubtful, though I think my chance of success the best. I shall feel no chagrin at defeat, for success will disturb my entire plans of life. Should I be elected Senator, I should feel bound to devote my whole time to preparation for the performance of the dignified and arduous duties which belong to that high station. Of course, my election will involve an immediate abandonment of my profession, and a great pecuniary sacrifice. My private affairs, however, are getting into a good condition, and before my time of service would commence, I shall, without some unforeseen occurrence, be in receipt of an income from my property amply sufficient for us all. Indeed, had this not been the case, I should have refused the solicitations of my friends; still, my profession is so lucrative that I think it almost wrong to abandon it. The general state of things is very bad in this country; money still continues

scarce, more so, I think, than I have ever known it. The banks are all broken, and a large portion of the people with them. Vicksburg is improving in spite of all this, and its prospects are decidedly better. With the exception of the temporary inconvenience, I am, perhaps, as little injured as any other man by the hard times. It has procrastinated, but, I believe, not materially diminished, my pecuniary prospects. Judge Guion has not come home yet, but I am in daily expectation of his arrival. Anna is with him, and I anticipate from her society this winter a higher degree of enjoyment than I have yet known in this country. I have no doubt the trip will be of vast service to her, and I need not assure you that she will receive all the affectionate treatment which her delicate state of health demands, and which is due to so beloved a sister. The health of Vicksburg has been and is most excellent, so that I am very anxious for her early arrival. From home you have no doubt had later information than I can furnish. When I last heard, they were all well. Mother and Abby, however, will have a very lonesome winter of it, and I shall often wish myself there to cheer them for a passing hour. I suppose you have located (that is a good American, if not English word) yourself by this time. I do not wish to impose any task on you, but you must continue to write me as often and as fully as other engagements will permit; and if you do not receive letters from me as often as you may expect, attribute it to anything but forgetfulness or want of interest. That you may reap in pleasure and improvement the fruition of your fondest wishes, is the desire of

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Letters—Presidential Election of 1840—Letters—Mr. Prentiss' Exertions—Visits the North—Invitations to attend Whig Conventions and Mass-Meetings—Speeches at Portland and Newark—Anxiety to hear him—Returns Home by Sea—Canvasses Mississippi as Candidate for Presidential Elector—Letters.

Æt. 31. 1840.

One of the most auspicious events in Mr. Prentiss' life was the visit of his younger sister, referred to in the preceding and following letters. How it soothed his morbid impulses, solaced his loneliness, and paved the way for still happier results, the reader himself, as he goes on, can hardly fail to see.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

Vicksburg, *Jan.* 18, 1840.

Dear George:—

I acknowledge I have treated you badly. I have written you but twice since your departure. The fact is, I exhausted myself so much, both mentally and physically, during my political campaign in the summer and autumn, that, since my return, I have absolutely been wanting in energy sufficient for the transaction of the most ordinary business. At the same time, my business, both private and professional, has been more weighty and pressing than ever heretofore. I am, however, recovering my tone and elasticity, and have relieved myself from the pressure of my affairs. My exertions in traversing the State were greater than on any previous occasion, and I was not aware,

until my return, how severely I had tasked my energies. I had rather make a campaign in Florida than again undergo the same fatigue. I have just returned from Natchez, where I left Anna, in fine health and spirits, enjoying herself much among my friends, who are extending to her great kindness and attention. She will spend several weeks there. I have to be at Jackson during the next month, in attendance upon the Courts, and I preferred that she should spend the period of my absence at Natchez. She looks exceedingly well, and is enjoying herself greatly. Our climate, though much more inclement than I have ever known it, seems to act upon her with the most salutary influence, and I feel the strongest hope of taking her home in the spring entirely restored to health. She wrote you a long letter a few days since, by which, I presume, she has rendered it unnecessary for me to enter into particulars in relation to her occupations, associations, and feelings. Her presence has been a source of great gratification to me, and I anticipate still more from our journey home in the spring. I have not decided positively as to the route, but we have talked of going to St. Louis, thence across Illinois to Chicago, down the lakes to Niagara Falls, &c. This is said to be a most delightful route in the spring season. I do not know what time I shall start, but it will necessarily be late. Of the folks at home you have probably heard since I have, for our mails are in such infamous condition, that I seldom get a letter in less than six weeks or two months. I have nothing new in the way of general affairs. You have, doubtless, heard of Harrison's nomination for the Presidency, instead of Clay. In this I was disappointed and somewhat mortified.* However, I am inclined to think, that Harrison

* Gen. Harrison's nomination was very unpalatable to many of the Southern Whigs. A leading member of the party in Mississippi, writes to Mr. PRENTISS, under date of January 12, 1840 :—"With regard to the Presidential election, what are we to do? I am greivously disappointed at the result of the Convention, and the Whigs here generally are dissatisfied. What are we to do? Can we rally with spirit under the banner of Harrison? I fear we cannot. Will he get a vote south of the Potomac? Will Tyler even secure Virginia? At any rate the Whigs here think it little short of the back track; and I am sure there is no one can infuse into them any spirit or enthusiasm except yourself. Many of them speak of

has a better chance of election than Clay would have had. Still, I think his chance a small one. The spoils-party will, in all probability, succeed. I have lost confidence in the people—not so much in their honesty as their capacity. The principle of democracy is rapidly destroying and eating out all the principles of the Republic. Indeed, practically, the Republic no longer exists. It ceased under General Jackson. In a Republic, the rights of all are equally protected. In this government, as now administered, the rights of *the majority* alone are protected. We are now living under a *despotic democracy*. But a truce to politics. The last letter I got from you was dated at Halle, immediately after your return from Kissingen. I am daily expecting another. Pray, do not take example from me, but write often. I will try and improve in this matter myself. I am well. God bless you.

Yours affectionately,

S. S. Prentiss.

TO THE SAME.

Vicksburg, *March* 30, 1840.

Dear George:—

Between absence from home, ill health, and accumulated business, I have again rendered myself liable to just complaint from you. But my remissness has been compensated by Anna, who has not failed, I believe, to keep you well informed of the state of affairs here. I have suffered much the last two or three months, not from any particular disease, but from general debility, and a consequent indisposition for busi-

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making a grace of necessity and quitting the field. * * 'If anything could excite in them any zeal on the subject, it would be, I repeat, a word from you. This is not conjecture; I know it to be true. At the election which immediately succeeded your visit to this county, the Whigs, as you have doubtless seen, swept all before them. Could you not give us your views in a few lines which I might show to some of the leading Whigs, or to all of them through the press? I believe it very important."—Ed.

ness or exertion of any sort. I am, however, gradually recovering my elasticity, and trust that soon "Richard will be himself again." After I wrote you last, I went to Natchez for Anna, and spent some three weeks there very pleasantly. She enjoyed her visit exceedingly. Her health has improved far beyond my most sanguine expectations, and if she can retain, on her return home, the advantage derived from her visit South, I shall felicitate myself much upon my skill as a physician. We each received two letters from you by the Great Western, and I need not tell you they afforded us much gratification. I rejoice that your spirits are so good, and your situation and pursuits so agreeable to you. You seem to be diving deep in German metaphysics. Be careful that you do not dash your brains out on the bottom. The study of metaphysics, when confined to the operations of the human mind, is doubtless a noble pursuit—perhaps the loftiest of which we are capable—but, to my judgment, it should not extend beyond the limits of observation and experience. He who attempts to analyze the soul, and, as it were, by the prism of logic, to resolve it into distinct and separate elements, runs the risk of arriving at the same conclusion in regard to mind, to which Bishop Berkeley's reasoning led him in relation to matter—to wit, that it has no actual existence. It is much easier to prove that mind is but a quality or attribute of matter, than that matter has only an ideal existence. I have always considered it as impossible for a man to understand the organization and structure of his own soul, as to lift himself by the waistband of his own breeches. I do not feel competent to judge of the character of the writings of your present favorites, Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, &c. &c.; but I would caution you against wading into metaphysical disquisition beyond your depth. It is a dangerous science, and the *Gnothi Seauton* may be carried to such an extent as to destroy the capacity for any other sort of knowledge. Metaphysicians are seldom fit for the practical affairs of life. However, do not understand me as quarrelling with your studies, but merely as wishing to impress upon you the importance of studying, *pari passu*, with the theory, the *practice* of the mind. Correct the

metaphysical abstractions of the scholar by comparison with the metaphysical facts developed in history. History is to me the great text-book of the philosophy of the human mind. But enough of this. I am delighted at your progress in German, and trust, in one or two years, to make you my tutor in the jaw-breaking tongue. I have the desire and hope to gratify it, of visiting Europe, and spending a couple of years in the acquisition of knowledge, my stock of which is sadly deficient. It may be two years before I can accomplish my objects, and wind up my affairs in this country. The terrible state of the times here throws many obstacles in my way; but I doubt not my ability to surmount them. I shall go home with Anna some time in June. I anticipate much pleasure in the trip, and shall probably take the route by the way of the lakes, to give her the opportunity of beholding the mighty cataract of Niagara. Good bye. God bless you.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

VICKSBURG, *June* 13, 1840.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I believe neither Anna nor myself has written for some three or four weeks. The reason is, that I have been absent on business, and A. has been considerably indisposed with an attack of fever, from which, however, she is now rapidly recovering, and will, in two or three days, I trust, be quite well again. She was taken sick two weeks ago, while visiting at Colonel Vick's, and is still there. She had every possible attention, and could not have been more kindly treated, even at home. I think her illness will prove of great service to her, as she was very bilious, and might otherwise have been taken ill upon the way home. Now there will be no danger of that. I never saw one recover as rapidly as she has done the last three or four days, since she became convalescent. Her spirits are very good, and I do not think there

is any danger of her being sick again this summer. She will be ready to start for home in a week, though I fear my business will not allow me to leave so soon. I cannot tell precisely when I can get off, but it will be between this and the first of July. We have not determined upon the route we will take, but shall one of us write when we do start, giving you all the information necessary to judge when you may expect us. My health is excellent, never better, and I long to leave the annoyances of business, with which I have been overwhelmed, for the quiet enjoyments of home—for I shall never be able to consider any other place as a home to be compared with that where dwell my mother and sisters. A. is crazy to start, and will return to you all, like a bird to her nest. I think her visit has been of great service to her, both in health and feeling. She has been much in society, and has been treated everywhere with a kindness and attention which I never before saw extended to any one, certainly not to any stranger. I have a thousand times wished that Abby could have been with her to add to and participate in her enjoyments. She got a letter from you a day or two since, and we were very happy to learn that you were all well. Consider the next page full of love.

From your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

The year 1840, will ever be memorable in the political history of the United States. It is well depicted by the accomplished Legare—himself a prominent actor in its scenes—in the opening of his admirable essay on Demosthenes, first published in 1841. Mr. Legare belonged to the Conservative section of the Democratic party :—

The subject of popular eloquence, always an attractive one in free countries, has been invested for us with a more than ordinary interest, by the events of the last year. A new era seems to have occurred in the development of our democratic institutions. There have been congresses of the sovereigns in proper person. We have seen multitudes, probably greater

than any addressed by the ancient masters, brought together by means of the steam-engine, from the most distant parts of our immense territory, to consult with one another upon the state of the nation, and to listen to the counsels of men distinguished among us for their influence or ability. We have seen the best speakers of the country, called for from all parts of it, compelled to leave their homes, however remote—some of them drawn forth even out of the shades of private life—to advise, to instruct, and to animate their fellow citizens, exhausting all their resources of invention to supply topics, of strength to endure fatigue, of oratory to command attention, and even of voice to utter and articulate sound, in order to meet the almost incessant demands made upon them by a people insatiable after political discussion. It was no one part of the country that was thus awakened and agitated; the commotion was universal; yet nothing was more remarkable in these stirring scenes than the order, decorum, and seriousness which in general distinguished them. These eager throngs listened like men accustomed to inquire for themselves, and to weigh the grounds of their opinions. There was to us, we confess, something imposing and even majestic in such mighty exhibitions of the Democracy. But quiet and patient as these vast popular audiences certainly were, to a degree much beyond anything that could have been imagined beforehand, their *attention* was far from being uniform and undiscerning. *They never once failed to listen to the best speech with the deepest silence, and to award the highest honors to the best speakers.* We mean the best in the proper, critical sense of the word; for our previous opinions, founded upon the experience of other times, have been fully confirmed by our own; that it is impossible to speak too well to a vast and promiscuous assembly; and that it is by qualities which would insure success at any time, under a popular government similarly circumstanced, that Demosthenes, the most exquisite of writers, was the delight, the guide, and the glory of the Democracy of Athens.*

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* *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legare.*—Vol. 1, p. 443. The reader, who desires a clear and authentic statement of the principles and objects contended for in this

No man took a more active, and few a more effective, part in this great civil contest than Mr. Prentiss. He set out for the North the latter part of June, and during his journey, addressed large assemblies of the people in almost every city he passed through. His coming was watched for along the route with the utmost eagerness; everywhere thousands seemed to be lying in wait for him, as one whom the people delighted to honor; repeatedly the steamer, on which he had taken passage, was forced to delay her departure or stop on her way, until he had satiated the popular curiosity by making a speech.

A friend writing to him from Lexington, Ky., under date of August, 18th, 1840, thus alludes to this Northern journey:—

I traced your route by the newspapers through St. Louis, Chicago, Buffalo, Syracuse, to the city of New York, and

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election by the Whigs and their allies, the Conservatives,—will find it in "a Declaration of Principles and Purposes, adopted by a General Convention of the Whigs of New England, at Bunker Hill, on the 10th of September, 1840,"—prepared by Mr. Webster—(See his *Works*, vol. ii. p. 41.)—and in Mr. Clay's speeches at Hanover County, Va., June 27, and at the Nashville Convention, August 17, 1840.—(See his *Life and Speeches*. Mallory's Edit.—Vol ii. pp. 408, 427.)

The opening paragraphs of the Bunker Hill manifesto are so characteristic of the Expounder of the Constitution, and so admonitory to our day, that they deserve to be cited.

"Fifty thousand of the free electors of the New England States, honored also by the presence of like free electors from nearly every other State in the Union, having assembled on Bunker Hill, on this 10th day of September, proceed to set forth a declaration of their principles, and of the occasion and objects of their meeting.

"In the first place, we declare our unalterable attachment to that public liberty, the purchase of so much blood and treasure, in the acquisition of which the field whereon we stand, obtained early and imperishable renown. Bunker Hill is not a spot on which we shall forget the principles of our fathers, or suffer anything to quench within our bosoms the love of freedom which we have inherited from them.

"In the next place, we declare our warm and hearty devotion to the Constitution of the country, and to that Union of the States which it has so happily

though your arrival at home I have not yet seen announced, it has doubtless taken place. I can form no adequate idea of the pleasure to be derived from such a journey as yours, when through a space of near twenty-five hundred miles, the most public and flattering demonstrations of the approval, the esteem, and the admiration of the people were, on all sides, offered you. It falls nothing short of a Roman triumphal procession, even in its external show, and when in the one case it is the homage paid to intellectual worth, and in the other to military courage and success—often over untrained barbarians, I cannot but regard the modern as the most glorious mark of public approbation. Mr. Clay and Mr. Crittenden have both gone to the Nashville Convention. The former understood you were to be there, and expressed his regret very strongly, when I informed him you could not be present.

Among his papers is a large package of letters from New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Alabama,

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cemented, and and so long and so prosperously preserved. We call ourselves by no local names, we recognize no geographical divisions, while we give utterance to our sentiments on high constitutional and political subjects. We are Americans, citizens of the United States, knowing no other country, and desiring to be distinguished by no other appellation. We believe the Constitution, while administered wisely and in its proper spirit, to be capable of protecting all parts of the country, securing all interests, and perpetuating a national brotherhood among all the States. We believe that to foment local jealousies, to attempt to prove the existence of opposite interests between one part of the country and another, and thus to disseminate feelings of distrust and alienation, while it is in contemptuous disregard of the counsels of the great father of his country, is but one form in which irregular ambition, destitute of all true patriotism, and a love of power, reckless of the means of its gratification, exhibit their unsubdued and burning desire.

"We believe, too, that party spirit, however natural or unavoidable it may be in free republics, yet, when it gains such an ascendency in men's minds as leads them to substitute party for country, to seek no ends but party ends, no approbation but party approbation, and to fear no approach or contumely, so that there be no party dissatisfaction, not only alloys the true enjoyment of such institutions, but weakens every day the foundations on which they stand.

"We are in favor of the liberty of speech, and of the press; we are friends of free discussion; we espouse the cause of popular education; we believe in man's capacity for self-government; we desire to see the freest and widest dissemination of knowledge and of truth; and we believe, especially, in the benign influence of religious feeling and moral instruction on the social, as well as on the individual, happiness of man."

Maine, Louisiana, Massachusetts and other States, begging him, on behalf of Tippecanoe clubs and Whig associations, to be present at barbecues, mass meetings, grand conventions, log cabin raisings, and whatever other strange names designated the political gatherings of that *annus mirabilis*. These letters, signed, as many of them are, by gentlemen of the highest distinction in their party, and coming, too, from all sections of the Union, afford a very gratifying memorial of the estimation in which he was held by his political brethren throughout the nation. "If it is once noised abroad that PRENTISS *is to be here!* the people far and near will turn out *en masse*." Such is the burden of nearly all these communications, whether they came from the Red River in Louisiana, or from the interior of New York—from Baltimore, or a remote hamlet on the Tombigbee. Some of them are quite pathetic in their entreaties. One writes after this wise: "If you will come, I believe you might turn the scale in this State, so intense and universal is the desire to see and hear you." Another declares that the region to which he is invited is "missionary ground," and beseeches him not to refuse those who are trying to reclaim it from political heathenism, the advantage of one salutary address.

A few extracts from these letters may interest the reader. A distinguished politician of Tennessee writes him, under date of July 8:

> Since my arrival in Nashville, I have found great anxiety manifested to know whether you will be present at the Convention to be held here on the 17th of August. Will you come? Your reply must not be in the negative; for, I assure you, much depends upon your presence. I believe a certainty of it would be good for ten thousand people. You will find here a set of the warmest-hearted, most thorough-going, and noblest Whigs you have ever met; and a few days spent with them will add vigor

to the blows which you will deal the enemy in Mississippi, in September and October. *So come you must.* No excuse will be received.

A letter from my father-in-law, Dr. S——, accompanies this, pressing your attendance. He writes it, not only as one of the "Invitation Committee," but as a Whig, and your personal friend. You will find in his home everything prepared for your accommodation, for he insists that you shall be his guest. The ladies add their entreaties to his and mine; and I know you are too much of a Bayard to withstand *their* request.

The Chairman of the Whig State Central Committee of Maryland writes him from Baltimore, early in August:

At the earnest solicitation of many of the prominent Whigs in this City and State, I write to beg of you to visit Maryland on your return to the South, and spend a few days with us. It is the *unanimous* desire of the Whigs of Baltimore, to have you favor them with a speech. It would, in the opinion of your many warm friends here, go very far to turn the scale in favor of the Whig cause in this city, and, perhaps, in the State. The contest will be fierce in every county in Maryland, and if our eloquent friends from abroad will give us a helping hand, we feel very sure of a successful result.

About the same time he received the following letter, signed by ten of the leading Whigs of that city:

BALTIMORE, *August* 4, 1840.

SIR:—

At a meeting of the "Fort Meigs Club of the City of Baltimore," held on Saturday evening last, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"*Resolved*, That a committee of ten be appointed, whose duty it shall be to correspond with the Hon. S. S. PRENTISS, and request him to address the people of Baltimore, at such time as will suit his convenience."

The Committee take great pleasure in discharging the duty

assigned them, and they beg leave to assure you, that, in asking your compliance, they express the wish of all the Whig citizens of our city.

It is too late now to enter into a detail of the circumstances which induce the Whig party everywhere to solicit the aid of influential and prominent friends, in order that all its members may be aroused to more decisive action, and that those who oppose us from a good motive may listen to a calm and dispassionate discussion of the important interests involved in the approaching contest for the Presidency. The questions which divide us and our opponents are too well known for us to dwell upon them in a communication of this kind. Suffice it to say, that we solemnly believe, that if the rapid march of Executive usurpation be not arrested by a timely change of our rulers, the day will quickly come when men of all parties and of every vocation will lament, in bitterness of spirit, the wreck of those rights and privileges which were once so peculiarly their own. Although our hopes of success are as strong as they can be, and every expression of public sentiment gives confirmation to our hopes, yet we would stimulate every one to a determination of purpose that will not stop short of the irrecoverable overthrow of the party in power. * * * *

In the vast array of champions in our cause, we look with peculiar pleasure to you, as one whose eloquence and comprehensive powers of mind can do much to stay the downward tendency of public morals, and the prostration of general and individual welfare; and whose patriotic efforts, in pointing out the path of duty, or laying bare the profligacy of our rulers, have accomplished the happiest results; and we sincerely hope that your time and convenience will allow you, at an early day, an occasion to gratify your numerous friends here. You will, therefore, oblige us by informing us when you will be with us, in order that all necessary arrangements may be made for your reception.

A gentleman who had known him in Mississippi, writes from Utica, N. Y., under date of August 5th :

I have just seen accounts of your famous reception by the citizens of New York, on your way to Portland. I doubt not you gave them, as usual, such a speech as they were unaccustomed to. My object in now writing is to say, that the people here, and *all round the country*, are looking for you at this place on the 12th. It is the day of the State Convention, for the nomination of candidates for Governor, Presidential Electors, &c., &c.; and there is to be an immense gathering of the masses, to assist in the Log Cabin raising. It will doubtless be the largest popular assemblage ever convened on any political occasion in the Empire State; and it has gone abroad that you are to be here. If it is possible for you to do so, you may be sure that you will confer an everlasting favor upon the party, and gratify thousands, yes, tens of thousands—for the count will have to be made by myriads. You have no idea of the incalculable good you could do. The fact is, the people have *set their hearts* upon your coming.

I send you by this day's post, a lot of newspapers, which I had first prepared to send to Corwin, of the *Yazoo Banner;* but after my wife had read them, she was determined you, or rather Miss Anna, should have them, that she might see what the Buckeyes, Wolverines, and other Western folks, had said about you.

The following is an extract from a letter, written under date of August 8, by a gentleman of New Hampshire to a noted politician of Maine:

I perceive by the New York papers that Mr. Prentiss, of Mississippi, is about to visit Portland; and having learned to estimate his worth to the country, and the cause of the country, by the principles he promulgates in his speeches, very many of the Whigs of this region are anxious that he should meet them at the Spring Hotel, in Newbury, Vermont, on the day of the Convention of the valley towns. There are few men in the Union, whose voice would be heeded with more cheerfulness than that of Mr. P. Webster, linked as he is with every tie that binds us to

the Constitution and laws of the country, possessing as he does the deep respect of every politician of the times, would hardly command so large an audience, or carry so heavy an influence as PRENTISS. The sublime polish of Everett, the rough humor of Bell, the home-made eloquence of Wilson, and the convincing arguments of Slade, stand no chance in competition with his powerful speeches. The cry is for PRENTISS! The Whigs of Vermont and New Hampshire want him to come up to their help. The *need*, they *deserve* it. Will he not come? Will you, sir, be good enough to inform him of our wants, and of the pressing solicitations of his brethren in the cause of Reform? I hope you will; nor do I hope more ardently than hundreds of others whom I have seen. I think Mr. PRENTISS may do us much good. He is a Southern man with national principles, Whig in heart and soul. Ours is the dark corner of the State, like the north side of Solomon's temple; and it cannot be enlightened without the aid of distinguished men from abroad.

Nothing could show more forcibly the peculiar attraction of his eloquence, than the uniform tenor of these invitations; while the contemporaneous notices of his speeches, and the recollections of them, which are still fresh in the memory of tens of thousands, all attest their wonderful power and beauty. Indeed, were I to put on paper the various descriptions which have chanced to reach me of his addresses, in 1840, at Portland, Newark, Buffalo, and other places, they would make a little volume. Unfortunately, not one was ever reported. It only remained, therefore, to give such impressions of them as could be recovered after the lapse of so many years. Reminiscences of this kind are unsatisfactory, it is true; a genuine piece of oratory, like fine music, or a beautiful landscape, can never be reproduced in mere verbal description; but yet they have a certain value and interest of their own. With what avidity we read personal anecdotes and recollections of the great orators of antiquity. Who is not delighted with such

reminiscences of the celebrated speeches of Chatham, Burke, Fox, Sheridan, and Canning; or those of Patrick Henry, Ames, Clay, Webster, and Calhoun.

The following is an account of Mr. Prentiss' speech at Portland:

It would be quite impossible, at this late day, to give anything like an adequate account of Mr. Prentiss' reception and speech in his native town, during the great campaign of 1840. No description, however felicitous, can do justice to such a scene, even if written under the full excitement of the occasion; much less one prepared many years afterwards, when the vivid and peculiar impressions of the moment have faded from memory. Still, what I can do to bring back and represent to you that memorable evening, shall be done with the utmost pleasure.

The Presidential election of 1840, you need hardly be reminded, was marked by popular agitation and enthusiasm, unparalleled in the history of the government. The fountains of the great deep seemed broken up, and far more than twice forty days and forty nights, the whole nation was tossed, and carried hither and thither, upon the fiercest waves of political excitement and revolution.

As Mr. Prentiss himself expressed it, in his speech at Portland (I quote from the notes of a meagre report):—"Rarely has the history of the world witnessed such a scene as that now passing before our eyes. We behold this whole nation, from the shores of the Atlantic to the Mississippi, rising up as one man; and flocking together in every State, city, and village, to discuss and hold counsel upon the administration of their public affairs. It is a grand movement of the People. Far and near, throughout the Union, they are mustering for the contest, bearing in the midst of them their simple Log Cabin banner! By this sign—emblem of peace, patriotism, and homely toil—they expect to conquer. Everywhere resound 'dread notes of preparation.' Everywhere is the skirmishing going on. Look at the faces of the two parties. Upon one sits Defeat; upon the other, the joy of coming triumph. Look at their acts too. Already victory perches upon the Whig banner. You hear its

notes sounding across the mountains, like those of young eagles screaming in the air. See how, beyond the Alleghanies, they are rushing to the support of their old friend, who helped vanquish for them the banded Bedouins of the forest! In the young and giant West, hardly are the vestiges of Locofocoism to be found. Old Kentucky has already spoken with a voice of thunder. Indiana, too, has spoken. And wherever the people utter their voice, the swelling tide of victory greets your ear. The tornado from the West is moving onward to the South. Why, look to the party in power. The old Democracy everywhere are leaving it. Their veteran generals are deserting them. The old Jackson men—the Imperial Guard of the party—have gone or are going, and the feelings of those who are left, may be seen in their dismayed countenances!

"Fellow-citizens: a noble triumph is within your reach, and you have a cause worthy of being crowned with it. A great civil crisis is upon us, and the interests of generations yet to come are involved in the issue. At Bunker Hill, what would have restrained you from sharing in the battle? Your ballot is now your bullet; and the one may serve as well here as the other did there. I have recently passed through the Great Valley, and travelled thence along the immense lakes—each one of them another Mediterranean—which stretch on to the borders of New England. Everywhere I have found the Whigs using the same arguments—animated by one sentiment—inspired by the same hopes. Never before did such complete unanimity pervade their ranks. Their meetings are incessant, immense in numbers, and full of enthusiasm. Victory, I repeat, already perches upon our standard."

It was in this crisis of the contest, and when the Whigs were thus exultant in the assurance of coming victory, that Mr. Prentiss arrived in his native town. Glowing reports of the speeches made by him, while journeying North, heralded his approach, and redoubled the desire to hear him in Portland. So eager was this desire, that he had scarcely crossed his mother's threshold, before a committee waited upon him with an urgent request that he would address the people.

Many of our citizens had already listened to Mr. Prentiss.

On the 4th of July, in 1837, happening to be in Portland, he electrified a Whig gathering by the eloquence of an impromptu speech; and several of his fellow-townsmen were present at the Webster Dinner, in 1838, when old Faneuil Hall fairly trembled with the thunders of applause, called forth by his address. But to four-fifths of the mixed assembly congregated on Thursday evening, Aug. 21st, 1840, Mr. P. was an entire stranger; they had never heard and few of them had ever seen him before. A considerable portion of his auditors were from neighboring towns—from Scarborough, Westbrook, Gorham, Falmouth, North Yarmouth, Brunswick (including many of the College students); while some came from a distance of fifty, seventy-five, or one hundred miles. I doubt if, since the visit of Lafayette, Portland had witnessed so large and enthusiastic a gathering of the people. The meeting was held in front of the City Hall. Long before the hour had arrived, the windows of the hotels, stores, and dwelling-houses, near by upon Congress and Middle streets, were lined with ladies; the high steps too, fronting the Hall, with the adjoining rooms, and every accessible doorway and window, were crowded with the beauty, fashion, and matronly worth of the city. The mass of the people were in front of the rostrum, erected for the speaker immediately before the Hall. Lights were scattered all around; and the illumination gave a brilliant appearance to the scene. The effect of the lights about the platform, which only grew brighter and disclosed the speaker more distinctly to the multitude, as the early evening gradually darkened into night, was particularly fine.

Mr. Prentiss, conducted by old friends, made his appearance just as the sun was going down. The instant he was seen ascending the rostrum (for by his lameness he was at once recognized) a shout of joyous and heartfelt welcome greeted him from every part of the assembly. He was introduced, in a spirited and highly eulogistic address, by his old college friend, Col. John D. Kinsman—a gentleman who will be long and most kindly remembered for the fine social qualities which so eminently distinguished him.

On presenting himself, at the close of Col. K.'s address, he was hailed again with three enthusiastic—I might almost say, *affectionate* cheers; for the feeling which pervaded the vast concourse, was something far deeper and more cordial than that of mere admiration for oratorical talent. It betokened a warm personal interest, as well as pride, in the man. When the cheering had subsided, he looked around upon his audience, his countenance radiant with emotion, and then,

"Like a man inspired,"

spoke right on for three hours.

And now, could I report to you that address exactly as it issued from his lips, I feel the most entire assurance that in style, logic, and patriotic sentiment, it would be deemed worthy a place beside the best specimens of American popular eloquence, whether of the present or past times. But, alas! instead of the real gem, resplendent in strength and beauty, there remain only petty fragments, and those almost turned to dust. He began his address by thanking the audience for their cordial welcome, and expressing the delight with which he found himself in the midst of so many old friends. The thirteen years which had elapsed since he went forth from them in quest of fortune, seemed but as a few days; and in the pleasant and thronging associations of the Past, he could hardly recall his thoughts to the weighty errand that had summoned them together. Gladly would he here rest, like the Knight of the Leopard, and forget, for a while, that war is raging between the Christian and the Infidel. But he must turn away, alike from the grateful associations of the Past and the friendly courtesies of the Present, to remind them of that Public Opinion, which is now weighing in its scales the political destiny of the Republic. After this graceful exordium, he proceeded at once to a discussion of the great principles and interests involved, as he conceived, in the pending election. A large portion of his address was devoted to an elaborate exposition of the nature, laws, and effects of the credit-system. Although liable to serious abuse, he contended that, under wise limitations, it is a most beneficent system, and

had been an inexhaustible mine of wealth to the United States. It was the twin influence of credit and confidence, especially, which had built up the Great West to its height of power and industrial grandeur. Armed with these peaceful implements. American industry and enterprise had subdued the wilderness and caused it to *rejoice and blossom as the rose.* From the credit-system he passed naturally to the currency, capital, labor, and their practical relations. His remarks on the true position of the working-man in this country, were admirable. There are demagogues among us, he said, who tell the poor man, in the very spirit of the arch-fiend in Pandemonium, that the rich man is his enemy. And yet how often do we see the employer of to-day become the laborer of to-morrow, and the laborer changed into the employer! This is the legitimate result of our free institutions; and how, in face of such a fact, dares any man to inflame the bad passions of the different classes of society, by teaching that there is a natural hostility between them. The sons of the poor man have actually the better chance in the race of wealth; as a general thing, they first reach the golden eminence. Stephen Girard began life a poor boy; and so did John Jacob Astor. They were the architects of their own fortunes. They acquired their wealth by their superior enterprise. The son of the poor man is most likely to prosper, because honest industry, perseverance, and hope, are most likely to be his portion; and these are the mainsprings of success in life. The party in power address "the toiling millions," as the cant phrase is, just as if poverty were their destiny—a sort of fate, from whose decree there is no escape. But poverty is, in this country, no such Procrustean bed; nor is labor here subject to any such hard necessity. Our institutions are illustrated in the race-course, where every horse is put upon his own mettle. The slowest cannot win the prize; it belongs to the fleetest. We train our sons, like young eagles, to soar aloft, and not to flutter about like owls. I say to the laboring man: You have the same chance before you that Benjamin Franklin had. The path of success is as free to you as it ever was to the thousands and tens of thousands, whose industry and enterprise have raised them to affluence, independence, station, and honor in the community.

I never hear these infamous appeals to popular envy and prejudice without being reminded of Satan tempting our mother Eve. As the arch-fiend

> "Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her fancy,"

so do the Locofoco demagogues approach the laboring man, "inspiring venom," and raising

> "—— distemper'd, discontented thoughts,
> Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires."

Nor can I ever witness these attempts of passion and Satanic cunning without wishing I possessed the spear of Ithuriel, that I might touch and unmask the monster.

From the currency and labor, Mr. PRENTISS passed to the alarming encroachments of Executive power and patronage. The time had come when the foreign missions of the Republic, and even the highest judicial stations, were given in reward of mere partisan services. Unworthy servants, whom the People had cast off and consigned to a political grave, rise again in newness of life at the touch of Executive favor. The rights of the States, too, were falling a prey to Executive influence. The elective franchise was trodden under foot at its behest. Look at the outrage recently perpetrated upon the Congressional Delegation from New Jersey—a State which shed her best blood in the revolutionary struggle for our liberties. The Whig members were sacrificed without a hearing, without evidence, without trial, and this by direct interference of the Executive with the legislative branch of the Government. Heaven forbid that such violent measures should ever be repeated! The Union itself could not long survive them. It is my deliberate opinion, that Locofocoism has done more to break asunder the connecting links—the ties of honor, interest, and affection—which bind together the States of this Union, than all other causes since the formation of the Government. But here let me say that I take a wide distinction between Democracy and Locofocoism. I believe, the great mass of those who have supported this Admi-

nistration are honest men, and suppose themselves to be genuine democrats. But for the guides, who have misled and deceived them, I have no such respect. They have concocted a system of politics which I term Locofocoism. It is politics boiled down, so to say, and distilled into a poisonous drug. They have labelled it Democracy; but I regard it as the very essence of political evil. He here referred in illustration, and with thrilling effect, to the outrages consummated in his own State. There, where these apples of Sodom were already ripe, the Locofoco governor had declared to the world that Mississippi repudiated her public obligations—that she would not pay the State debt, principal or interest. The same governor had encouraged forgery, by recommending a repeal of the law prohibiting the issue of spurious bank paper. It is true, that the body of the Administration party in Mississippi do not sustain these ultra and immoral principles; but most of their leaders do—in act, if not by word. They are like the Cornish wreckers, who hang out false lights to allure and deceive the ill-fated mariner; so do these selfish demagogues delude the people by their false and wicked doctrines. Look not, then, at mere professions. The devil does not always show his cloven foot; but he is none the less a devil for all that. There are false prophets now, as there always have been, in the world. Take heed, therefore, when men hold up before your eye the sparkling goblet of Democracy—beware, lest there be poison in the draught.

Mr. P. now passed to a spirited vindication of Gen. Harrison, the Whig candidate for the Presidency, against the charges of the other party, closing with a beautiful eulogy upon his plain, homespun, farmer-like virtues. In the course of his eulogy, he dwelt with great earnestness upon the mischiefs of a profligate press, comparing some of the Administration journals, which had been especially fierce in their assaults upon Gen. Harrison, to the hell-hounds that Milton stations at the infernal gates.*

* "About her middle round
A cry of hell-hounds, never ceasing, bark'd
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal; yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,

But I fear you are weary of this bald, meagre sketch, and will, therefore, stop.

He spoke, as I have said, for three hours, and with great rapidity. The language, too, was chosen with such exquisite propriety, every word was so pat in its place, the illustrations were so happy and unexpected, and drawn from such a varied store of reading, image followed image in such quick succession, that a full and exact report of the whole would, I am sure, have baffled the skill of the best stenographer. The sentiments were plainly the fruit of long and mature reflection; all the rest was no less obviously the inspiration of the hour. It was the first time his mother had ever heard him, and perhaps the tone of his address was somewhat affected and softened by the consciousness of her presence and that of his sisters. The audience listened to him without a single sign of impatience to the last sentence. All were delighted, and, with one heart, united at the close in giving him TWELVE CHEERS. The welkin rang with applause, as sincere and enthusiastic as ever greeted the ear of Night. Three cheers followed for Mississippi, three cheers for Maine, and then the charmed multitude separated with *three cheers more for* SEARGENT S. PRENTISS!"

One of his greatest speeches in 1840 was delivered at Newark, N. J., on his way back to Mississippi. He afterwards referred to his reception at Newark with unusual satisfaction, and intimated that he deemed his speech there one of the best made by him during the campaign. I have

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And kennel there; yet there still bark'd and howl'd,
Within unseen. Far less abhorr'd than these,
Vex'd Scylla, bathing in the sea that parts
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore;
Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when, call'd
In secret, riding through the air she comes,
Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches, while the laboring moon
Eclipses at their charms."

Paradise Lost, Book ii. ll. 653–666.

been so fortunate as to obtain very interesting accounts of this remarkable address from two of the most eminent citizens of New Jersey, themselves distinguished for their eloquent gifts.

The Hon. William Pennington, then Governor of the State, writes thus in relation to it :

NEWARK, *Feb.* 14, 1854.

DEAR SIR:—

I had the pleasure of hearing your brother, whose death the whole country mourns, deliver his great speech in this city, in the summer of 1840. I rode with him to the meeting, and sat on the stage by his side; I had, therefore, a most favorable opportunity for seeing and hearing all that passed. It was a mass-meeting of the Whigs of the county of Essex, in the midst of the exciting contest between General Harrison and Mr. Van Buren. The number present was computed at five thousand. It was one of those mild, serene, and genial days which often mark the close of our northern summer. The place was under the shade of the elm-trees, on the Military Common, east of the Episcopal church, which fully protected the speaker and the audience from the rays of the descending sun.

I had never before seen Mr. PRENTISS, and it was my loss that I never met him again. But his reputation was well appreciated in this community—filled as it is with business men, familiar with the South, and careful observers of the public characters and events of their country. A large number of the Democratic party were in the assembly. I cannot pretend to describe the speech, but it made on me an impression I have never forgotten. After hearing many political addresses from the ablest men in our country, I consider (and have often so said) that this speech of Mr. PRENTISS' surpassed them all. He spoke between three and four hours, commencing about four o'clock in the afternoon. The audience stood in solid ranks, and during the whole period, every man kept his place, intent only on the orator, and joining in the frequent shouts of applause. When he began to speak, he

appeared to falter and hesitate,* but after some twenty minutes this all passed away; and from that time to the close, it was one continuous outburst of high wrought manly eloquence. His manner was fine, his language strong and expressive, and he could carry an audience further with him than any man I ever heard. It seemed as if he held the very hearts of the immense columns before and around him at his command. When he rose in the majesty of his noble thoughts, the whole assembly appeared to rise with him. For, after all, the power of the speech was in the sentiments and views presented. There was no tinsel about it, no clap-trap; but it seemed as if the man had an inexhaustible mine of thought from which he could draw at pleasure.

He reminded me, at times, of Webster, not in manner, but in depth and wisdom. It is the unanimous opinion among us, that no man has ever come up to this effort within our circle of observation. He was inspired for the occasion, and we were all inspired with him. His main argument was to point out, in connection with the subject of the tariff, the true characteristics of a Republican Government, and to demonstrate that industry has here its reward, and the man of labor his just position in the world. Many of his hearers were our respectable mechanics, men of fortune and of character, and their splendid mansions surrounded the open area in which he was speaking. I shall never forget his effective appeal in support of the great principle of social equality for which he was contending, and the right of the humblest, by his own industry, to raise himself and his family to the highest standing among his fellow-men. Going on in an elevated strain, he turned to these costly homes, and said, with a power and a manner quite inimitable, "What has reared those princely dwellings that surround me? who now occupy those abodes of comfort and honor? It is industry; it is protection to American labor; it is the salutary influence of our Republican Institutions which has built these edifices; and their

* This was owing to a severe indisposition, from which he had been suffering for several days. He was, in fact, quite ill when he rose to speak.—Ed.

wealthy occupants were once, it may be, poor and homeless boys!" I give you only the imperfect idea; no one could ever report him; but every word was true to the letter, and the whole audience knew and felt it.

I can only say, in conclusion, that, judging from the exhibition of this day, your brother possessed a power of thought and a faculty as a public speaker not excelled, in my humble opinion, by any man in the country.

I am, with very great regard,

Your friend and servant,

WM. PENNINGTON.

For the following I am indebted to the Hon. Joseph C. Hornblower, LL.D., then Chief Justice of New Jersey:

NEWARK, *March* 6, 1855.

MY DEAR SIR;—

I should be delighted if it were in my power to give you even a faint idea of the speech you refer to; much more, if I could give you such an account of it, as would do justice to the splendid argument, and if possible, the more splendid eloquence of your brother on that occasion. It was the first and only time I ever heard him speak, and I expected much from what public fame had said of his professional, as well as his political and intellectual power; but the half had not been told me. I had witnessed many exhibitions of eloquence and mental power in the forum, and on the political arena, that did honor to the heads and hearts of the speakers; but I have no hesitation in saying, after making every allowance for the excitement of the occasion and my sympathy with his political sentiments, that I never listened with such intense interest and delight to any other public speaker. Nor was I alone in my admiration, for every one who heard him, however they differed from him in their political affinities, seemed anxious to give him the meed of applause. His speech was delivered on the Military Park, in front of my house. Circumstances admitted of a ver short notice to the public of the time

and place of his speaking, yet thousands assembled around the platform erected for him, under the wide-spreading shade of our stately elms. The first word he enunciated, silenced the multitude, attracted every eye, and riveted the attention of all his audience. His voice was clear and distinct, loud enough to be heard by all, and yet euphonious and pleasant. Calm and self-possessed, he was not thrown off his guard either by the acclamations of applause, or by what some speakers might have considered as rude and impertinent interruptions. He never failed to answer, in the most easy and courteous manner, the questions that were occasionally addressed to him from the crowd by some doubting or carping politician.

But, my dear sir, you cannot expect me, especially at this distance of time, to give you his language, or his unanswerable arguments. You might as well ask me to give you an exact geometrical diagram of the forked lightning, leaving, for an instant only, its brilliant track in the vaulted sky, and yet impressing our minds with a sublimity and grandeur never to be forgotten, as to ask me to give you the language or the arguments that flowed in copious and overwhelming, yet placid streams, from his heart and his lips. One incident, however, I cannot forget; and if you will indulge me in the use of my own language, where I cannot remember his, I will endeavor to give you some idea of it. While earnestly speaking in favor of the protection of American industry, standing with his face towards the audience on his right, a voice from the left—of some honest inquirer, or possibly, a hostile politician—loudly asked him, if that system would not make the rich richer, and the poor poorer? The orator, instantly, but courteously, turned to the interrogator, and thanked him for putting the question; and then slowly turning his gaze, with an appropriate and corresponding motion of his arm, as if surveying the stately edifices surrounding the Park, he said: "My friend, I am informed that, much to the honor of your city, those elegant dwellings that adorn this Park, and the glittering equipages standing before some of their doors, or now rolling through your streets, belong, almost exclusively, to mechanics, or to the sons of me-

chanics. It is a splendid testimony to the enterprise, skill and industry of Newark, and enough to gladden the heart of every patriot. *But*, let me tell you, that but for the blessed influence of that protection which the government has hitherto afforded our manufacturers, you who have worked in your shops, would be doing so now—and you whose sires, to their honor be it spoken, were blacksmiths and shoemakers, would be mending the old axes and shoes that they made, instead of occupying the the palace-like dwellings that surround us." The orator then, quietly changing his position and addressing the audience at large, resumed the course of argument he was pursuing when interrupted by the interrogatory put to him, and finished his address amid the loud, and long continued plaudits of the enlightened and admiring multitude.

Your lamented brother, I assure you, made his mark here, and left impressions upon the public mind in this community, that time alone can efface. Please accept this, my dear sir, as my poor tribute to the memory and splendid talents of your departed brother.

With great sincerity and respect,

Your obedient servant

Jos. C. Hornblower.

The following letters give a glimpse of his feelings in view of the praises heaped upon him :

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

New York, *August* 30, 1840.

Dear George:—

I am now on my return South, and shall leave to-morrow for New Orleans, in a packet-ship. I do this to avoid the fatigue and annoyance of the land route. On my way by the lakes, and since I arrived in the North, I have been continually engaged in the great political contest, until I am worn out and utterly exhausted. I have made speeches at New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Syracuse, New

York, Newark, Portland, and last, though not least, at *Gorham*. My audiences have varied in number from two to six thousand, and I have usually spoken three hours, generally in the open air. So you see I have been stumping it upon a grand scale—no less than that of the Union. I have, in addition, received from fifty to a hundred invitations from different quarters of the country, which I have declined, and I now go by sea for the purpose of avoiding the necessity of addressing the citizens of Philadelphia and Baltimore, who are, I learn, lying in wait for me. Oh! that I were in Germany, quietly studying the history of the past, instead of participating in the history of the present. Indeed, and in good sooth, I am gorged with politics, and surfeited with publicity. I had rather fish in the Great Brook one day, than spend a year amid the senseless hurras of political partisans. It is not reputation one gets—it is only notoriety. However, in two months the contest will be over, and I must hold on till then. If the conclusion was more remote, I should certainly desert. Presuming you feel some interest in political matters, I doubt not you will be pleased to learn, that the Whigs have every prospect of success. I feel confident of the election of General Harrison.

I suppose Anna has told you all about her visit South. It was a source of unmingled gratification to me, and, I think, both of advantage and pleasure to her. Her health seems entirely restored, and her spirits are again buoyant. She had every reason to be delighted with the South. She was treated by the good people there with unbounded kindness and attention. Indeed, I never saw one make friends so rapidly. All became attached to her, and she deserved it, for she is a girl of noble and generous character. Should her health require it, I shall not hesitate again to take her South. I spent only a few days in Portland. My health was not good, and of course I did not reap much pleasure, except from meeting mother and Abby. Abby is well, and the same quiet, amiable, affectionate, single-hearted, and sensible girl as heretofore. Mother came with me to this city, and is now at William's, in excellent health and spirits, and greatly surprised at the ease with which she has ac-

complished what she considered a great enterprise. I think her visit will prove of much service to her. We received your letters by the Great Western and the Acadia, and were all much gratified. Your presents, through Mr. S., were safely delivered, and received with affectionate pleasure. I thank you for your remembrance of my Sir Walter Raleigh propensity, and while smoking the beautiful pipe, shall often in my reveries transport myself to Germany, sit by your side and converse with you. I am just interrupted, and must close. I will write you a long letter the moment I get to Vicksburg. Stay in Europe as long as you please. Carry out all the plans you have at heart, and believe me, nothing can afford me greater happiness than to assist you in their accomplishment. I would have added another sheet, but have not time. God bless you, my dear boy. Write me often.

Yours affectionately,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTERS.

NEW YORK, *August* 30, 1840.

DEAR GIRLS:

As I leave to-morrow, I must drop you a line, and yet have hardly time to do so, I am so much interrupted. We arrived here safe after a pleasant journey, which mother bore much better than any of us anticipated. She is now in fine health and spirits, and will, I do not doubt, enjoy her visit much. I have determined to go by sea for the purpose of avoiding any further political annoyance. I leave to-morrow in the packet-ship Auburn, for New Orleans. I wish I could embrace you both before going. I feel quite melancholy at leaving you, and do not see how I shall get along without one of you with me. Suppose you spend the winter with me alternately. I'll take good care of you, and you shall keep house for me. What do you think, Anna—will you take "Cub Castle"? You can tell Abby what sort of a place it is.

Let me insist upon your writing me very often—it cannot be too often. Your letters are to me the greatest source of pleasure. One word about pecuniary matters; I shall be very much mortified, if you do not use my purse precisely as if it was your own—not only mortified, but deeply offended. And now, my dearest sisters, God bless you. I love you very much, and am proud and happy in your affection. I shall write you as soon as I get home. Should any letters come for me, direct them to Vicksburg.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *September* 24, 1840.

MY DEAR SISTER:

I arrived here yesterday, after rather a pleasant passage, and find my health somewhat improved, though by no means entirely restored. The weather, while at sea was delightful; unusually so for the season of the year. I stayed but a few hours in New Orleans. At Natchez I arrived in the night, and left early in the morning. Of course I saw none of our friends, except Mr. Harris, who came up to Vicksburg with me. From him I heard concerning the good people of Natchez. They are all well. Mrs. M—— is in the country; the rest of them, I believe, are at home. Nothing has occurred worth mentioning since you left, unless you so consider the marriage of Miss N. Here in Vicksburg the folks are horridly dull and gloomy from the hard times, which seem even worse than ever. Judge Guion and family are pretty well. I have not yet called on any other of your friends, but learn they are well. There is no gossip here worth relating. I expect Mr. D. home to-day. I found him in New York, much to my surprise. He started home before me, by the way of the lakes, in company with Doctor G——'s family. From what observation I could make, I take it he is going to make a fool of himself—in other words, marry. Well, he has at least the sanction of example from the majority of people,

and perhaps, after all, those are the fools who don't marry. Politics are absorbing all attention here now. I shall be compelled to canvass the State until the election (1st Monday of November), after which, thank Heaven, I shall have some quiet. I start for the interior in the course of two or three days. You can't tell how much I shall miss you this winter. I feel very gloomy, and am sorry to find a tendency to melancholy fast overcoming my natural spirits. It is the worse, because I can trace it to no particular cause. It broods over me like a black cloud. I sometimes wish I could lie down, go to sleep, and not wake. Your presence always did much to drive away the dark evil spirit. I will trust, however, that rest, and a return to ordinary business, will restore mental as well as bodily health. You girls must write to me often—your letters must supply your absence. I suppose mother will be with you by the time this letter arrives. I trust she has had a pleasant time in New York. Portland will seem dull to you this winter, after the variety of your last year's life. You must be especially careful of your health. Abby must see to it that you are not imprudent. She is not as careless of exposure to the weather as you are. Good-bye to you, dear girls. I shall write again soon.

Yours affectionately,

SEARGENT.

His return South was waited for by his political friends with the utmost impatience. He was a Whig candidate for Presidential elector in Mississippi, and as such, was expected to canvass the State. The Louisianians, too, were ready to intercept him on his way up the river. An urgent invitation to attend a grand convention at the capital of the State was put into his hands the instant he stepped ashore at New Orleans. An old friend writes him: "I am urged on all hands, to use what influence the claims of private friendship may give me, in seconding the wish of the whole public here that you should accept the invitation to

our great gathering on the 28th inst. The people speak of your northern tour as of the brilliant flight of a comet, and they are as anxious to see you as they would be to catch a glimpse of such a glorious luminary. If you come, I beg you to make my *log cabin* your castle."

The following letters will show how hard he toiled during the month of October, and also his opinion of the election, when it was over. What he says of the superior chances of political success, which belong to men of ordinary ability, has been signally illustrated and confirmed in the subsequent history of the country. The Presidential elections of 1844, 1848, and 1852, seem almost to have decided the question, whether a great man is likely again to become our Chief Magistrate. Nature herself, however, appears disposed for a while to relieve the question of practical point, by suspending the growth of really great men on this side of the Atlantic.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *Nov.* 12, 1840.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

At length "the wars are all over;" the election has taken place, and we Whigs consider ourselves in some degree paid for our exertions, by the success which has accompanied them. You have already learned, I presume, from the public journals, our complete victory in Mississippi. We have carried the State for "Old Tip," by a majority of nearly three thousand. I returned about a week ago, after a most arduous and tiresome canvass, and was literally worn out—so much so, that this is the earliest moment in which I could muster sufficient energy to write a letter. My health has been good enough, but my faculties of body and mind have been utterly exhausted. I am recovering, however, my strength and elasticity, and shall soon be myself again. I feel as old John Bunyan's Christian did, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, when the burden fell from his back. I will

never make the same sacrifices to the public, which I have heretofore done. But for my political engagements for the last three or four years, I should have been able to furnish W. and S. such means as they required for their success in business, and long ago been relieved from any necessity of professional exertion. As it is, I will accomplish the result after a while. I am now very busy practising law, and shall have my hands full of business. However, enough of business matters, my little sister. I have paid a great compliment to your good sense (though a very deserved one), by talking so much about them. Don't give yourselves any trouble or anxiety about these things. I certainly don't deserve the credit I have received if I do not manage them all very easily. I have received two letters from you since I wrote, one from Portland and the other from Boston, or rather Cambridge, where, I am pleased to learn, you have been enjoying so delightful a visit at the house of your friend, Mrs. G. I was quite taken with your description of the domestic happiness you witnessed, and if I could find a woman I loved, and *who loved me*, and I had nothing else to do, perhaps I might follow your advice and marry, myself. I called last night on Mrs. Bodley, and also Mrs. Vick, who has just returned from Kentucky. They are both well, and talked a great deal about you, and regretted much that you did not return this winter. They are very much attached to you. I dined at Mr. Smedes' yesterday, and called at Mrs. Lake's, but did not find her at home. I have seen none of your Natchez friends yet, but shall go down to N. before long. I am glad mother had so pleasant a visit in New York, and trust her health has not suffered by the exertion. How much I would give to come and spend the winter with you all. Warm hearts would conquer cold weather. But as I can't be with you, I must hear from you often. I got a letter from G. the other day. He is very happy, and that makes me so too. I have looked over my letter, and there is nothing in it worth sending, but as I have not time to write another, you must take this from

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

You must write particularly of your health. If the cold weather affects you unkindly, you must come and keep house for me next winter. I am in earnest about this. God bless you all.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Nov.* 12, 1840.

DEAR GEORGE:—

The contest is at length over, and I have leisure at last to sit down and commune with my dear brother. Upon my return from the North, of which you have already heard, I felt it my duty, from every consideration both of patriotism and interest, to canvass the State in my capacity of candidate for elector. Accordingly, I started out, and for four or five weeks before the election, addressed the people in various portions of the country, exerting myself to the utmost of my ability, mental and physical. I was exhausted by my previous efforts, on starting, and returned about a week ago, completely worn out; so much so, that this is the first day I have felt able to write a letter. My general health has been, and still is good, and I am rapidly recovering the use of my faculties. I assure you, however, that on my return, so severely had my powers been taxed, they seemed hardly under the control of volition. In none of my previous political campaigns have my energies been so severely tested. You will doubtless be gratified to learn (if you have not already done so) that success has crowned the efforts of the Whigs in this, as almost in every other State. Mississippi has gone for "Old Tip" by nearly 3,000 majority. No event in history presents a subject more interesting for the observation of the politician or the philosopher, than this Presidential election. All that is serious and ludicrous, all that is sensible and foolish, reason, passion, and prejudice, have combined in producing the result. General Harrison has been elected President, I judge from what we have already heard, almost by acclamation; and yet four years ago, the same people,

with the same facts as to the characters of the two men before them, rejected him, and chose Mr. Van Buren. General Harrison is, I doubt not, a good man and a patriot; and, I believe will conduct his Administration so as to restore purity to the Government, and prosperity to the people; but he is a very ordinary man.

His election, however, has convinced me that a man of ordinary ability, in a free government, has, in time of peace, a better chance of political success, at least in attaining the chief magistracy, than a man of great and acknowledged talent. The people in a Republic have a jealousy and fear of commanding and superior intellects, and will not, except in some desperate emergency, such as war or revolution, trust them with the highest office of the country. If I recollect right, such was the case in the ancient Republics. They called upon their great men when in great straits, not from choice, but from necessity. However, I did not intend to philosophize myself, but merely to state that it was a good subject for reflection. I am heartily rejoiced at the result, and that it is over. I have fought through the war, and feel now entitled to an honorable discharge. I have returned to the practice of the law, which will, I trust, enable me before long "to take up the stitches" (to use an old woman's phrase) which I have dropped while engaged in politics. Till my pecuniary affairs are placed beyond reach of accident, I shall not again quit business. I received your letter from Berlin, and sympathize with you in the pleasure afforded by your summer rambles. I would I could have been with you; my gratification would have been as great as your own. You ask if I saw your friend S—— and conversed with him in relation to your plans. I saw him, but only for a moment at a time, and had no conversation with him. But whatever your plans may be, they are mine. Nothing has occurred, or can (excepting my death), which can interfere with their accomplishment, so far as my co-operation is concerned. In pecuniary matters you already understand my wishes and ability, neither of which are changed. On that subject, once for all, my dear brother, put your mind at ease. Whenever it shall

be necessary to take that matter into consideration, I will not hesitate to inform you. When you write again, unfold your wishes and views, if they have undergone any change. I had a sweet letter from Anna, a day or two since. She was on a visit to Mrs. G., at Cambridge, Mass., where she appeared to be enjoying herself much. I miss her exceedingly, and but for mother and Abby, would try and have her out here again. I sometimes feel very lonely, and almost determine to go back to Portland, become a boy again, fish in the Great Brook, and live and die at home. I know not that I shall ever have a home elsewhere. Your friends about Vicksburg are all well, Mr. Smedes, Judge Guion, &c. &c. Pray write me very often, and not attribute to neglect any infrequency in my letters, for business almost destroys my capacity for other matters. Pleasant hours to you, my brother.

Yours affectionately,

SEARGENT.

CHAPTER XIX.

Domestic Correspondence—His Marriage—Letters—His Course in Relation to the Gubernatorial Election of 1843—Visit and Letter from Henry Clay—Letters.

ÆT. 32–4. 1841–3.

We now approach the most eventful period of Mr. Prentiss' personal history. The year 1841 was the darkest in his life; but near its close, it was suddenly brightened by a star of promise, which attended him all the rest of his mortal journey. It is plain, that the knowledge gained in his political career, was chiefly of that kind which only "*increaseth sorrow*;" while disclosing the depths of human selfishness and folly, it afforded nothing to satisfy the cravings of a mind like his. The applauses of the multitude, as we have seen, he estimated according to their real value. His pecuniary embarrassments were increasing; his health, too, began to show signs of failure; while his disappointment and disgust at the world were fast deepening into downright misanthropy. Yet his affections, though a "*sealed fountain*" to most of his intimates, were still pure and strong; they only wanted a *home* in order to spring forth in all the ardor and beauty of his earliest years.

But the following letters throw so clear a light upon this point, and upon the whole inner life of their author, that they need no interpreter:—

TO HIS MOTHER.

New Orleans, *Jan.* 11, 1841.

My Dear Mother:—

I doubt not you are surprised, both at my delay in writing and at my writing from this place. I have been here about three weeks, and each day have intended to perform the pleasant duty of informing you of my well being. * * * So much for business. And now, how do you do, my dear mother, and my sweet sisters? You know not how dear you are to me, how blank and pointless the pursuits of this life appear when unconnected with you. I have thought of you a thousand times since I have been in this city, and almost cried on Christmas and New Years' Day, because I could not be with you. I don't know that I ever felt so lonesome, though I know half the people in the city. I think one of these days I shall turn boy again, and come home and forget that I ever left it.

I have had a tolerably pleasant time here, dining out almost every day, and seeing a vast number of people; but I am tired of it, and shall return to Vicksburg to-morrow, where I expect to have the pleasure of finding letters from you all. Tell Anna I shall write her as soon as I get to V., and tell her all the news: how Mr. D. has got married, and taken possession of "Cub Castle;" and how, if I could find a woman half as sweet as my own dear sisters, I should be tempted to follow his example; and how I don't expect ever to have such good fortune, &c. &c. By-the-by, Anna, Mrs. M. has been here two weeks, and so has Mrs. W. I have seen them frequently and they have made very kind inquiries about you. Oh, how I do wish you were here; you know I treated you very badly in not bringing you here last winter. But you shall come and see me again, and I will atone for that neglect. But stop, I am going to write you a nice letter from Vicksburg, and it won't do for me to open my budget now. So good-bye. I kiss you all, and wish you a happy, happy new year.

Your affectionate son,

Seargent.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Jan.* 15, 1841.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I have just returned from New Orleans, where I was detained nearly a month in arranging some business matters. I would not write until my return, expecting to find letters from you awaiting me here. In this I was not disappointed. Yours of the 21st November had arrived, and I again had the gratification of being assured of your welfare and happiness, both of which constitute no small part of my own. Indeed, I could almost envy you the excellent spirits which you enjoy, and which are even proof against the gloomy clouds and dense fogs which, to my vision, ever envelope the regions of metaphysical philosophy. I wonder much at the deep interest you take in the disquisitions of the schoolmen. Metaphysics seem to me to constitute a country, in which the further you penetrate the less you see, becoming every moment more sterile, and at last utterly forbidding any advance; an atmosphere which becomes rarer as you fly, until your pinions, whether of reason or imagination, refuse support, and you fall fluttering to the earth; clouds, bright and gorgeous only upon their edges and exterior. Ha! ha! I see you hold up your hands, in holy horror at this tirade against your favorite pursuit.* Well, my dear boy, I mean

* This is not exactly the place to assert the dignity of this ancient science. But a few words respecting the classical and scholastic worthies, mentioned in the next sentence, may not be irrelevant. There is reason to believe that, in later years, Mr. PRENTISS himself rated at a much higher value an acquaintance with their pages. The works of Plato formed one of the last additions to his library. "Those," says Judge McCaleb, of the U. S. D. Court, "those who enjoyed with him the pleasures of social intercourse, are aware with what humility and veneration he paid his devotions at the shrine of ancient genius. No man with all his admiration of modern excellence, was more prompt in according superiority to the master spirits of antiquity."

The habit, once so fashionable in the literary world, of referring to the renowned thinkers of the Middle Ages only in the way of ridicule, is happily growing obsolete. It is now generally admitted by those qualified to judge in the case, that, with all their faults and errors, they were truly great men, and that they laid posterity under lasting intellectual obligations. They formed, indeed, the necessary connecting links between the ancient and the modern world of Thought. Their writings are noble monuments of logical culture, dialectic power, and theological reflection. Let me cite, on this point, a few words from Leibnitz.

no offence against "divine philosophy," and ask pardon of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and yourself. But, in sober truth, are you not devoting too much time to this study? Have you made yourself sufficiently acquainted with history and biography, especially the former? These are the great storehouses, from whence to draw, not only lessons of practical knowledge, but also the food for philosophy herself—the subjects for reflection. It is useless to have a mill without corn to grind; equally so to have philosophy without knowledge. The reason why I make these suggestions is, that in the accounts you have given me of your studies, I do not remember that you have ever mentioned history, biography, or general politics—by which I mean the philosophy and science of government as it actually exists in the world. Not that I suppose you ignorant on any of these points, I know the contrary; but I wish you to become much more than a subtile metaphysician. I wish to see you a

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Having spoken somewhat severely of the errors of the Schoolmen, he immediately adds, with a generous warmth and fairness so characteristic of that eminent philosopher:—

"Quare etiam, sicubi mihi aliquid durius hic currente calamo excidit, id de temporum magis miserabili fato, quam hominum ignavia intellectum volo. Illi potius culpandi sunt, qui nunc quoque, inventa fruge, glandibus vesci malunt, et pertinacia potius quam ignorantia peccant. Nec vereor dicere, Scholasticos vetustiores nonnullis hodiernis et acumine et soliditate et modestia et ab inutilibus quaestionibus circumspectiore abstinentia longe praestare; hodierni enim nonnulli quum vix quicquam dignum typis addere veteribus possint, hoc unum faciunt, ut allegata opinionum cumulent, et innumeras frivolas quaestiones excogitent, et unum argumentum in multa partiantur, et mutent methodum, et terminos fingantque atque refingant. Ita illis tot tamque grandes libri nascuntur."

Plato is, in some degree, known and honored among us. But his great pupil and rival, it is to be feared, is an utter stranger to most American scholars. The cloud of inveterate prejudice still rests upon his once sceptered name. And yet the works of no uninspired author, ancient or modern—not excepting the divine Plato himself—are, perhaps, more worthy of being carefully studied and restudied by the young men of our Republic. How quickly would such discipline free them from the curse of incoherent, loose thinking! The eternal Ideas of Plato have visited the earth, and become enshrined in our Christian Faith and Bible. But the profound sense, the marvellous tact, discrimination, and practical sagacity, the observing eye, and scientific spirit of the immortal Stagyrite, can be found only in his own matchless pages. It is a popular impression that Aristotle was only a Grecian Duns Scotus—a subtile, hair-splitting metaphysician; and quite naturally, therefore, all the scholastic follies are imputed to him. Leibnitz, alluding to this imputation, remarks:—"Quum tamen nostro seculo post tot in Aristotelem doctissimorum et

wise, practical man, acquainted with the past history of the world, and able to make such knowledge subservient to its happiness. I wish to see you possess those general stores of information on all subjects which, if ten years younger, I would myself strive to obtain. I would not undertake any study without making myself master of it; but then I would make myself master of as many as possible. But enough on this subject. I do not intend to act as your Mentor, nor indeed am I capable; for I, every day, feel more deeply my own deficiencies in knowledge. I have the most entire confidence in your own good sense and judgment as to the direction of your studies, and do not wish you to allow your own opinions to be biased by anything I have said. I got a sweet letter from home yesterday; the dear folks were all well, as I trust they may long continue to be. I miss Anna's society much, and but on mother's

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prioris barbariei dissimillimorum interpretum curas nihil sit compertius, quam Aristotelem omnis illius ineptiae purum et insontem esse, qua Scholastici passim inquinantur. Errores ejus quicunque sunt, tales tamen sunt, ut facile internoscas lapsus viri magni et in rerum luce versati, a vertiginosis deceptionibus imperiti alicujus claustralis."

Aristotle is called by Dante, "The Master of those who know;" and he has, indeed, been one of the chief teachers of the human mind. His writings, which are still instinct with the freshness, power and genial life of Grecian intelligence, have been the meditation and delight of such scholars and thinkers as Hooker, Burke, Niebuhr, Hegel, Coleridge and Arnold—to say nothing of the great men, who sat at his feet in ancient and mediæval times. His Ethics, Rhetoric and Politics cannot be too highly recommended to the attention of the youthful student. He, especially, who aspires to public life, and would learn how to combine the manly grace and wisdom of Athens with the energy and freedom of our American oratory, should place those invaluable works among the manuals of his art. Mr. Justice Coleridge writes concerning the lamented Dr. Arnold:

"He cited the maxims of the Stagyrite as oracles. I never knew a man, who made such familiar, even fond use of an author; it is scarcely too much to say that he spoke of him as of one intimately known and valued by him; and when he was selecting his son's University, with much leaning for Cambridge, and many things which at the time made him incline against Oxford, dearly as he loved her, Aristotle turned the scale; 'I could not consent,' said he, 'to send my son to a University where he would lose the study of him altogether.'" And in one of his letters, Dr. Arnold says: "I am getting pretty well to understand the history of the Roman kings, and to be ready to commence writing. One of my most useful books is dear old Tottle's (Aristotle's) Politics; which give one so full a notion of the state of society and opinions in old times, that by their aid one can pick out the wheat from the chaff in Livy with great success."—Ed.

account would bring the girls out here to live with me. I am now very busily engaged in professional business, and do not intend to cease my labors again until I can do so permanently. It will take me perhaps a couple of years to place my affairs upon a proper footing. My practice is lucrative, and will continue to be so, though at present it is difficult to realize much from it. It will count, however, after a while. I will write again soon, and beg you will write me often. Your letters are a source of much gratification to me.

Ever your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

JACKSON, *January 31st*, 1841.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I fear I am getting to be a confirmed promise breaker. I told you in my last, from New Orleans, that I would write you on getting home, and yet nearly three weeks have elapsed, without the redemption of my word. The fact is, I have been overwhelmed with cares and business. So soon as I reached Vicksburg, I had to come out here to attend the courts, since which, labor and low spirits have deterred me from writing. I will not however delay any longer. I found a sweet letter from you on my return from New Orleans, and within a few days, have received another written on the last day of last year, for which, and its affectionate wishes and warm feelings, I thank you from the depths of my heart; you are a sweet, good girl, and so is Abby, and I love you much and shall love you always. You and Abby must each write me as often as you can; your sweet letters are very grateful to me. By-the-by, though you excel any one I know in the kind and gentle art of letter-writing, your epistles are not always exempt from criticism. I do not mean in sentiment or idea, but in words. So I will turn pedagogue again, my dear, and give you a lesson. You use too often the adverb "very;" it precedes almost every adjective used. Such frequent repetition is not only objectionable for its monotony, but actually weakens the idea

it is intended to strengthen. To use "very" so often is a *very* bad habit. Well now, am I not an impertinent boy, to criticise those who write so much better than myself. My only excuse is, that your sweet letters approach so near perfection, that I wish them to attain it. This is the only fault I now think of; should I perceive any more, I shall not hesitate to point them out to you. I had quite a pleasant time, at least a portion of it, in New Orleans. I had been there a week when Mrs. M. and Mrs. W. came down. I did not stop at Natches, and was not aware of their intention of visiting New Orleans until I heard they were in the city. I was compelled by business, to leave several days before them, and thus lost the pleasure of accompanying them up the river. I saw a good deal of them and also of Miss ——. The latter is *very* beautiful, but so silent and shy that I make but little progress in my acquaintance with her. Indeed, either from diffidence or dislike, or perhaps from my own uncouth advances, it seems to me she rather shuns my society. Perhaps I may as well make a clean breast of it, and tell you my feelings in relation to this young lady—both as you have invited my confidence, and because from the shrewdness of your sex, I suspect you know already as much about the matter as I do, and because, if I should make a fool of myself, I wish some one to pity and sympathize with me, instead of laughing at me; and for all these reasons I know no better confidant than yourself, my sweet sister. Well, then, I am not exactly in love with the aforesaid fair lady, but it would require but a small touch to make me fall into it, over head and ears. Her image is continually bobbing its pretty face into mine, even when engaged in the most serious business, and could I become certain that the soul is as fair as the body that enshrines it—that the jewel is worthy of the casket that contains it—and then could I find the slightest feeling of affection, responsive to my own, I would rejoice in laying my heart and fortunes at her feet. Without the latter requisite, the others would be useless. I would marry no woman on earth, who did not love me for myself alone, and not for honor, station, or wealth. Neither beauty, intel-

ligence, nor accomplishments, nor all united, could tempt me to marry a woman who accepted me—not because she loved me, but because it was a *good match*. I have ever yearned for affection; I believe it is the only thing of which I am avaricious. The necessities of life, business, politics, and the excitements connected with them, have heretofore in some degree occupied my mind and held in suspense, but not satisfied this craving, this hunger of the heart. But such objects have ceased to interest me. I am becoming rash and almost reckless of the ordinary objects of human pursuit. I do in honest truth believe that I ought to marry. If I do not in the next two years, I never shall; and if I do not, as soon as I can arrange my fortunes, I shall become a wanderer upon the earth, and, like an unquiet spirit, flit about till death shall afford me the opportunity of finding out whether warm hearts and generous affections meet with a readier response in the next world than in this. In good sooth, gentle sister, I see little prospect of my becoming anything but a crusty old bachelor. My taste is too fastidious, and my feelings too sensitive to afford me much expectation of success. Indeed, I have never before met a lady who caused the slightest fluttering in my breast, or the most remote inclination to woo and wed. And though, in the present instance, I must confess my fancy has been struck, and my feelings more enlisted than I was aware of, yet I have no doubt that Miss —— would look upon my suit, not only with indifference but absolute dislike. Well, I have a tolerably tough heart, and it shall not break for a bright eye and a ruddy lip, belong they to whom they may; and one thing I know full well, that though I may find little love or affection in the rest of the world, I can always turn to my dear good mother, my sweet and gentle sisters, and my kind and true-hearted brothers, and feel that I am not alone, even though they live far distant from me. But enough of this; you see what you have got by prying into my secrets. I have run through one sheet, and shall have to inflict upon you a double letter. I wished a thousand times you had been with me in New Orleans. It would have been delightful, wouldn't it? Mrs. M. and all of them spoke

of it often. By-the-by, did I tell you in my last, that Mr. D. and wife, and Mrs. G., came to New Orleans while I was there? They only stayed two or three days, and came home in the same boat with me. When we got to Vicksburg, Mr. D., having said nothing to me on the subject, I felt a delicacy in going up to "Cub Castle;" so I went to the hotel, and, as it rained badly, did not go out for two days. On the second day I got a long letter from Mr. D. begging me to come home and take my rooms. He apologized for not having said anything about it, on the ground that he never dreamed of usurping the house, and that he did not expect to live there himself, only till he could look around him and make other arrangements. I went up, took my chamber and one of the parlors, came out here the next day, and when I return shall feel quite domesticated at the "Castle." In the course of a year, I shall probably have it all to myself; and then you must come out and keep house for me—what say you? I shall be so lonesome keeping house all by myself. Come, do now, that's a nice good little sister. We have had the most detestable weather I ever saw. This is the last day of January, and we have had but two fair days during the whole month. It has been rain, rain, rain, for almost forty days and nights. I have not seen any of your friends in Vicksburg since I wrote. Judge Guion and family are as well as usual. I wrote mother a letter from New Orleans which I trust has reached you safely. You must have lost one of my letters by the great mail robbery. I am glad Abby is going to New York, and trust she will have a pleasant trip of it. I will write her there.—Much love to you all, from

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *March* 27, 1841.

MY DEAREST SISTER:—

I am in arrears to you for two letters. I did not receive either of them until a few days since. I cannot tell how

much I thank you for them, especially the last. I cried like a child while reading it, and even now the tears stand in my eyes, as I think of its expressions of affection, sympathy, and good sense. You cannot talk with me too freely, though there are few whom I permit to know my feelings on any subject of the heart, or from whose sympathy I would not turn with disgust. I have many friends whom I esteem, with whom I daily associate, and have for years, who know nothing of my heart, its real wishes and sympathies. Still I have not, like Pharaoh, hardened it; never did it abound, more than at present, with affectionate yearnings. But I fear from long intercourse with the world, and a continually growing dislike for it, I have hardened my manners, and too rigidly encased my feelings, not wishing to expose them to the vulgar gaze of those who could neither understand nor appreciate them. Indeed, the man in the "Iron Mask" did not more effectually conceal the features of his face, than I have many of those of my character. Most of those who know me—or suppose they do—think me exceedingly ambitious, and that I have but little *personal* regard, especially towards your sex. Now it is and always has been the very reverse. I have no personal ambition, and never had, at least for the objects of it. It is true, I have enjoyed great pleasure, sometimes, in the excitement of political pursuit; in "the rapture of the strife"; but nothing further. I laugh at those who look upon the uncertain, slight, and changeable regards of the multitude, as worthy even of comparison with the true affection of one warm heart; and I would sacrifice more, do more, and dare more, to win the love of a woman (I mean, of course, of one whom I loved), than I would to wield the sceptre of Napoleon. But I did not intend to give you my portrait, as you know the original so well, and will therefore leave it in its unfinished state. Let us go back and start again. *You*, my sweet sister, cannot talk to me, or write, *too freely*. You can have no thoughts to know which would not cause me pleasure, unless that knowledge caused you pain. Always write me as you have just done, and, if such a thing were possible, my love towards you would increase; but that is not possible. Everything you

said to me, and about me, was balm to my lonely and wounded spirit. I accept most gratefully your kind offer to come and cheer me up next winter. I cannot say yet, whether I can make you mistress of "Cub Castle," as I do not know positively whether Mr. D. expects to take another residence in the fall; that, however, was the understanding, when I came here. If he does not, I *shall*, for I intend you shall keep house for me if it be in a cottage. How happy we shall be. And I shall have no politics to attend to, and shall have so much more time to be with you than when you were here before. I know not how much to thank mother and Abby for sparing you. I wish you could all come. Why can't you, and live here? At all events, I don't believe I shall let you go back. I may not be able to come after you; but if not, we will make some other arrangement. In the meantime, for fear you might change your mind, which I have heard young ladies sometimes do, I close with your offer, and that part of the thing is settled.

And now, I suppose you would like to hear something more of myself, and whether I am in love or out of it, since my last; as there has been plenty of time for either. Well then, heigho! I believe love is a quagmire, where the more one struggles to extricate one's self, the deeper one sinks; and if that answer is not satisfactory, I say that I feel no better; and if that won't do, lest you die in ignorance, dear sister, I answer that I think of a fair (oh! how exquisitely fair) young lady, whom you wot of, twice as often as I did when I wrote you last; and that I have absolutely nearly finished a very doggerel piece of poetry (which I shall burn as soon as finished), the sole object of which seems to be, as far as I can judge, to ascertain how many words rhyme with ———. Well, my dear brother, that is all satisfactory; now tell us what progress are you making—have you seen her? or written to her? and does she know that there is such a man as you in the land of the living? Well, dear sister, I cannot tell you a lie. I have neither seen her, nor written to her, nor do I believe she knows that there is such a man as myself in the land of the living. Why, Searg, what a fool you are! I know it, sister. Why, you dolt, do you expect her to come

and see you? No. I've no patience with you—you're *so* stupid —what *hare* you done, and *are* you *going* to do? Don't get into a passion, my fair questioner, and I'll tell you all I know about it. I visited Natchez three or four weeks ago, and stayed there a week. I lost the pleasure, however, of seeing ———. She had gone to New Orleans on the very day I arrived. I saw Mrs. W. several times, and spent one evening at her house. She inquired kindly for you. She is, I think, a most excellent, and uncommonly intelligent lady. I returned in ill-humor to Vicksburg, since which time, business of the most onerous character has commanded all my time and attention. And now what am I going to do? I wish you would go to a fortune-teller and find out, for I don't know. I had half made up my mind to try and win her affections; but then what chance do I possess, totally destitute as I am of all accomplishments either of person or manner; so little accustomed to society as hardly to know its ordinary rules of etiquette; ignorant of music, painting, and all those things in which she most delights. Why should I court the mortification to my pride and sensibility, of finding my plain and homespun qualities scorned for the foppery of fools. Why should I expect a young girl to love me for qualities, which perhaps she has never thought of, while I am deficient in those which have the greatest influence in the eyes of your sex, whether young or old. Bah! I was a fool to fall in love; however, I ought not to blame myself, for I could not help it; and at any rate, I have become so tired of this solitary, lonesome life—my mind has gnawed upon itself so much—that perhaps a little torment of another sort would be a relief. Well, sister mine, you see what you have got by being made a confidant. One good thing will come out of it anyhow, if you will only continue to write me such nice, sweet, long letters. I shall not be sorry, whatever may be the result. Don't you think I am a great goose? If so, don't be afraid to say so. I wish you were here now—oh! how I do wish it! But you will come next fall, won't you? and be to me

The antelope whose feet shall bless
With her light step my loneliness.

But my candle burns low, and it is past the witching hour of night. You are, I trust, at this moment enjoying pleasant dreams, perhaps of your poor brother. But, whether sleeping or waking, God bless you and our dear mother, and all of you. Good night—good night. My love loads this last line from

Your affectionate

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *April* 9, 1841.

DEAR GEORGE:

Your long, kind, and affectionate letter of January was received some two weeks since, and I take to myself great shame that I have not answered it at an earlier period. But in truth I have not been well, and the little time in which I have been able to write, has been entirely absorbed by business. I have received no letter for which I so heartily thank you, as for this. Indeed, I cannot be very unhappy while I have such affectionate brothers and sisters, nor can I do their love such injustice as to say that there is nothing in the world worth living for.

You have written precisely as you should do, as I trust you always will do. You cannot pour into a more sympathizing bosom the story of your plans, your wishes, your feelings, joys and griefs. I am delighted to learn of the improved state of your health. You must be careful of yourself, and not permit too much application to study, to impede an entire restoration. I have not the slightest objection to the plans you have marked out for the next five years of your life; how could I, after you had defended them so stoutly? Indeed, my dear brother, I am delighted that you look forward to so much pleasure, through so long a period; and that you aim at such high and rational enjoyment. I trust you will travel happily for the five years you have allotted, through the interesting and varied paths you have pointed out; and when, retired from "the noontide sultriness,"

you are "crouched among fallen columns," musing with melancholy philosophy upon the past, whose mighty shadows rise in dim array around you, I will, in fancy at least, be with you, though not I fear in reality. My travelling days are over, George, and I care but little, either for the ghosts of past generations, or the palpable forms of the present.

Still, I thank you kindly, a thousand times, for the plans you have so affectionately traced out for me. Once, the prospect of realizing them would have made my eyes sparkle, and my pulse thrill with rapture; but, when I read your letter, I wept. For the next two or three years I shall practice law, for the purpose of repairing the dilapidation of my fortune, produced by my political career. This, however, is a matter of but little interest, and will be easily accomplished; for my professional practice bids fair to be more lucrative than it has ever before. After that, I know not what I shall do. I have no fixed purpose, and shall leave it to be decided by my feelings at that period. But enough. I do not wish to mar your happiness by my melancholy moods, and hereafter I will write more cheerfully, whether I feel so or not. I shall be happier too, by-and-by. What do you think? Dear Anna is coming out, to stay with me next fall and winter—to live with me, and keep house for me! Isn't that fine? I doubt not I shall be as merry as a cricket when she comes. I wrote her some time ago inviting her, and she says that mother has consented, and she has consented, and so the matter is all settled. I shall not be able, I fear, to go on after her. If not, I shall get William or Samuel to come out with her. It would be a fine trip for William, and an agreeable relaxation from business. How much it would add to our happiness, if you could be with us. Can't you put on your "seven-league boots," and step over and see us? We shall be very glad to see Mr. G. L. P., we assure him, and he may stay all night, and all next day and night, and as long afterwards as he pleases. Won't it be grand? Anna and I keeping house together! How comfortable she shall be, and how kindly and carefully I will treat her. And now, my dear boy, I have scribbled over a sheet, which contains so little of what I intended to say, that I

am almost ashamed to send it. I would not, but that it meets only a brother's eye. When I write again, I will speak of so much of your letter as relates to myself more fully. In the meantime, consider this last line loaded with love and kind wishes from your affectionate brother,

S. S. P.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *June* 10, 1841.

DEAR GEORGE:

I am in arrears to you for two letters, one of March 29, and the other which I received to-day, of May 7. I know not how it is that I am so continually behindhand in my correspondence, especially with you, for I assure you not a day passes in which I do not think of you affectionately, and if all my thoughts about you were transferred to paper, you would have full occupation in deciphering them.

Since I wrote you last, I have been extremely busy, and, most of the time, absent from home. Four years devoted almost exclusively to political exertions, have left a considerable gap in my life, which I am anxious to fill up. I have paid a pretty high price for the little political notoriety which I have attained, and regret most sincerely that I ever pursued an object of such small intrinsic value. However, I never had any personal ambition, and do not recollect the time when I would not have exchanged the applause of thousands for the love of one of my fellow beings. I think I have abandoned politics for ever; at all events nothing but a sense of duty (which is not likely to call upon me) will ever induce me to resume a pursuit which, however adapted to my capacities, is wholly at war with my feelings and inclinations. On returning to business, I find my private affairs in a somewhat critical situation, and were it not for the confidence I feel in being able to extricate myself by my profession I should be alarmed at their condition.

The expenses incident to my various political campaigns, were very great, but most of them I have already liquidated, and the

remainder would not have cost me six months' labor. Unfortunately, I find myself largely involved for others, who, prostrated by the storm which has swept over all classes in this country, have left me as security, to bear a very heavy pecuniary burden. I have already paid very large amounts for others, and within the last three months, have taken up security-debts, by mortgaging my own property, to the amount of at least fifty thousand dollars more. This I have done to obtain time, and afford me an opportunity of availing myself of my professional exertions. Some of my property I have sold, but not to a great extent. The best portion I shall be able to save, if my life is spared; for my profession has been and still promises to be very lucrative, and will, I think, in the course of two years, or three at the furthest, relieve me from all embarrassment. Had it not been for these security-debts, which I hold equally binding with my own, I should have been able to retire from business in the course of the present year. I have said nothing to you heretofore on this subject, lest it might annoy you, and I only mention it now for the purpose of explaining the necessity which will compel me for some years to remain at my profession in this country. These things will not make the slightest change in my arrangements with regard to yourself. If it were proper they should, I would not hesitate in telling you so. But I have so arranged my affairs already, that I can carry out all the views we have ever any of us entertained, without any injustice to others; you will, therefore, continue to carry out your plan of study and travel, precisely as you would have done, had I not mentioned this matter. The sum I spare you, is not one-twentieth part of what I can make annually at my profession, which will, I doubt not, be worth at least twenty-five thousand dollars a year. In this matter, lest you should entertain any scruples or delicacy, I claim to exercise the right of an elder brother, and am peremptory upon it. Indeed, my dear George, I have no use for money myself, and would not make any exertions to rescue my fortunes, were it not for those I love.

* * * This is a long and somewhat silly epistle; but if

you have not a right to know all about my fortunes and feelings, I don't know who has. It is a curious trait in our nature that we like to bore our friends with our misfortunes, and you see, you are not exempt from the common destiny. Good bye--God bless you, my dear brother, is ever the wish of

S. S. P.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

New Orleans, *July* 28, 1841.

My Dear Anna:—

I have intended, for some days past, writing you a long letter, but am suddenly compelled to return to Vicksburg on business, and shall start in an hour, so that I have barely time to drop you a line. I have been some three weeks in New Orleans and its vicinity; engaged partly in business, and partly in killing time, which hangs very heavily on my hands this summer.

I am beginning to count the moments, as I look forward to your arrival, and shall become every day more impatient. I have just been buying some furniture for our house, and especially for your room; I think you will be pleased with it. As to the best route for you to take, I have made considerable inquiry, and the result is this: should there be a steamship coming to New Orleans at the right time, and you learn by the N. O. papers that the city is healthy, I would advise that course, as the most rapid and convenient; next to this, I would recommend the same route which we took last summer. I do not think the Pittsburg route, or that through Georgia, will do at the season of the year in which you will travel. You must consult your own inclinations and comfort, however, in this matter. Write me the moment you have concluded, and start as early as you think your health will warrant. But I have not another moment to spare, so good bye, and my love to you all.

Your affectionate

Seargent.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Aug.* 26, 1841.

DEAR GEORGE:—

For the greater portion of the last two months I have been absent from the State, and in consequence did not receive your letter of June 12 until a few days since. Though I have not been sick, yet my health has not been as good as usual this summer. This I attribute to the extreme heat of the weather, which has been without precedent. For three months the temperature has averaged ninety-three or four degrees (Fahrenheit). Sometimes it has exceeded a hundred. Such intensity of heat has necessarily caused great debility both in the physical and mental system. I have never in my life felt so little capacity for exertion. The slightest labor has oppressed me as if it had been one of the labors of Hercules. Indeed, I suffered so much in June, that I determined about the first of July to go to the sea-shore, hoping the sea air would prove beneficial in restoring to me my usual elasticity. Accordingly, I visited several places on the Gulf, but did not find the benefit I had anticipated. I then tarried a couple of weeks in New Orleans, and returned home twelve days since, thoroughly wearied with my whole trip.

Summer in the country is so entirely destitute of incident, that I have nothing worth telling, unless in relation to general political matters, of which, I presume, you are nearly as soon and as well informed at Berlin as I am here. My opinion, however, may not be uninteresting to you. We are waiting in anxious and hourly expectation of learning the action of President Tyler upon the National Bank Bill, which has already passed both branches of Congress. A majority of people seem to think he will veto it. I shall not, however, believe it till the act is done. Should this special session of Congress fail, through the veto of the President, in establishing a bank, it will prove to be, in my estimation, a very great national calamity. A bank has been the great object of the Whig party. We have fought for it during the last ten years. Its establishment would crown the labors of the Whigs, and ensure their control, for a long period

at least, of the affairs of the country. A failure to do this, seals the destruction of the Whig party, which will immediately be broken up into factions, and probably fall an easy prey to the united and unprincipled energies of the Democratic or Loco-foco party. This latter party is as dangerous to the institutions of this Government as a monarchical one would be. Democracy is the enemy of Republicanism; indeed, of all restraint of constitution or laws. Democracy, like the ocean, is continually dashing its fierce and lawless waves against the shores which have been assigned as its limits. Already do the Constitution and laws, those barriers which the wisdom of our fathers opposed to its wild action, show fearful marks of its violence. Let the abrasion continue much longer, and I fear for the success of our "great experiment." May the evil omens be averted; but I look with much foreboding upon the prospects of our country. Political and moral feeling seem hardly to acknowledge any association with each other, and dishonesty in private life flourishes, like a fresh and vigorous shoot from the public stock. But enough of political philosophy. It is a subject that at present I almost loathe to investigate. You speak of the possibility of your paying home a visit next year, and if it will not interfere with your views and arrangements abroad, I think it would be well for you to do so. It would be a source of great gratification to mother and the girls, and I doubt not to yourself also. You could spend the winter with them, and return to Europe in the spring. It is not impossible but that, by that time, I could accompany you in a flying trip, returning myself in the ensuing autumn. I am looking with eager anxiety for Anna, though I do not expect her until the last of October. William comes out with her. The only drawback to my enjoyment this winter will be, that I shall be compelled, by the pressure of my professional engagements, to forego, a great deal of the time, the pleasure of her society. How I wish you were to be here to assist me in making her happy. You must excuse me, my dear brother, for my carelessness and neglect during the last three or four months. I have not been well either in mind or body. Hereafter I shall try to do better; at all events, do not let my

bad example, as a correspondent, operate upon you. Let us hear from you often, and in the most perfect freedom and confidence.

Ever your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Aug.* 28, 1841.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

It has been a long while since I wrote you last; though my letters to the girls, you know, are the same as if addressed to yourself. It seems to me an age since I saw you, and I cannot help regretting that I did not go home this summer, though my business was really such as to render it impossible. However, I look forward with great pleasure to my visit next summer, and only wish it was nearer. I am beginning already to count the days for Anna's arrival. You cannot think how happy I shall be to have her with me this winter, or how much I thank you for sparing her. Indeed, I sometimes feel that I am doing wrong and acting too selfishly in depriving you and Abby of her society for so long a period. But then again, I think it will be beneficial to her health, and afford her pleasure as well as myself. Oh! if I could only have you all here at once, how happy we should all be. I have got the prettiest house and the pleasantest situation in the whole State. The house is situated on a high hill, and commands the most extensive and the most beautiful view of the Mississippi River I have ever seen. I have six or seven acres of ground attached to it, which I intend to have laid off into gardens and orchards. I have already a very good garden; but I calculate upon Anna's making great improvements, for she tells me she is very fond of flowers. I shall have a garden at her command; so, you see, I shall not let her get lazy for want of work. She had better bring out some seeds of her favorite flowers, and try how they will grow here.

I stayed in New Orleans till the last of July, and since that

time have been at home. Since my return, my health has improved. Indeed, I have not been exactly sick during the summer; but the excessive heat debilitated me till I became very weak. It has been, without exception, the hottest season I ever experienced. The warm weather is now pretty well over, and notwithstanding the excessive heat, the health of the country about here has been good. My best love to you all.

Your truly affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

Immediately after the date of the preceding letter, the yellow fever broke out in Vicksburg, and the next two months were occupied by him chiefly in tending upon the sick and dying, among whom were some of his personal friends. One or two of them fell victims to that fearful malady in his own house.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *Nov.* 7, 1841.

DEAR ANNA:—

I have this moment received yours of the 20th ultimo, and am glad you have changed your route. I shall expect your arrival in New Orleans in two or three days. I am very much mortified that I cannot come down for you; but one of the most important courts which I attend is in session at Jackson, and I have to start in an hour. I came in from that place yesterday, in the hope of hearing from you. I had previously left a letter to be handed you, if you arrived during my absence. Though I consider the sickness pretty well over here, yet I dare not let you come till I am certain; so you must stay a few days among your friends at Natchez till I come for you, which will be soon. I write this under cover to Mr. Huntington, a friend of mine, whom you met while at Vicksburg, and who will pay you every attention. I send you the letter I had previously written, because I have not time to write more at present. Write me by Mr. H., and believe me ever

Your most affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

P.S. If Mr. H. considers N. O. healthy, and you and Samuel prefer, you can stay there a few days, and I will come down for you.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *Nov.* 14, 1841.

DEAR ANNA:—

I came in from Jackson this morning, hoping to hear of your safe arrival at New Orleans. I perceived by the papers that you had arrived, but was disappointed in not finding any letters. Presently, however, Samuel dropped in and relieved me from all doubts or apprehensions. I cannot tell how much I am gratified at your safe accomplishment of so much of your journey, and can hardly restrain myself from taking the first boat for New Orleans. My business, however, for a few days, must tyrannize over my inclinations, and to-morrow, instead of flying to meet you, I am compelled to return to Jackson, where I fear I shall be detained for eight or ten days. Is not this vexatious? To me it is terribly annoying. But you must forgive me for such apparent neglect. Nothing but the most imperative obligations could occasion it. The very moment I can tear myself away from my business engagements, I shall hasten to seek you. Your time, I trust, will pass pleasantly in the meanwhile; and I leave it entirely to your own option, to stay in New Orleans, or come up to Natchez. I have no choice in the matter, except that you should consult your own inclinations. If you find the city agreeable, perhaps you had better stay there. I am delighted to learn that your health has been improved by your voyage, for I was afraid you would not prove a very good sailor. I am glad you are going to Mrs. W.'s. The family are very kind friends of mine, and I think you cannot fail to be pleased with them. I have got things pretty well prepared for you here; but still, such an old bachelor as I am, must fall into many mistakes, and commit innumerable blunders in making arrangements for a lady. So you will, doubtless, have ample room both for patience and improvement. Mrs. Vick has sent me word that you must come to her house upon your arrival,

until you have properly arranged your own. But we will talk of such matters when we meet. I think the fever has entirely ceased in this place; there have been no new cases for a week. You must write me every day or two until I come down.

Present my respectful regards to Mrs. W. and Mrs. C. Also remember me to Capt. C. whom I had the pleasure of seeing in Portland. Take good care of yourself, dear.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *Nov.* 21, 1841.

DEAR ANNA:—

I came in from Jackson yesterday, expecting to hear from you. I have been disappointed, however; but I shall expect letters by the Ambassador this evening. I go out to Jackson again to-day, and shall be able to return some time about the middle or last of this week. I shall then immediately come after you; so you may expect to see me in about a week from this time. I trust you have enjoyed yourself, and will continue to do so. You can't tell how anxious I am to see you. I am entirely out of humor at keeping you waiting so long. There is nothing new here. It is perfectly healthy. Samuel has gone on a three days' hunt after deer, with Mr. Dawson; so I am all alone to-day. I enclose two letters for you from Portland. I won't write anything more as I shall talk with you so soon. Take *good care* of yourself. Remember me kindly to my friends, and believe me ever

Your most affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NATCHEZ, *Dec.* 28, 1841.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

You will deem it very strange to receive a letter from me, at this time, from this place, when you no doubt

suppose that Anna and myself are both safe at home at Vicksburg. Yet so it is; and Anna has not seen Vicksburg yet, though she has been nearly three months on her way.

We left New Orleans about three weeks ago, as Anna wrote you from that place. I expected to be detained in this place about a week by professional business, but between that and *some other business* of a more interesting character (of which you will soon hear from A.), I was not ready to leave for home till yesterday morning. But just as we were about to leave, we heard of the dangerous illness of a lady who resides some twelve miles from this place, and who sent for Anna to come and see her. She is an old friend of A.'s and mine—Mrs. Williams. We both went out immediately to her house, and found her very ill; but this morning she was better, and I left Anna there and returned to town. To-morrow I shall go after her; and to-morrow evening, or next day morning, we shall *certainly* go to Vicksburg.

Anna had written two sheets, which she was about to send, but had not time to seal and direct them; she, therefore, requested me to write a line, and send it at once. In a day or two you will receive a long letter from her, which will explain all our actings and doings, and will not, I trust, convey to you any information that will prove disagreeable.

As soon as I get home, I shall write more fully, and will tell you some things which I hope will be gratifying to you and Abby, as they have been to Anna and myself. Samuel is at Vicksburg, well, and enjoying himself very much. We expect many letters are awaiting our arrival.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *Jan.* 29, 1842.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I have been intending, for a week or two past, to write you a good long letter, but have, so far, neglected it for two

reasons; first, Anna writes so often, that I knew you had learned from her all I wished to tell you; and secondly, I have been absent attending the courts, and so busy, that I have hardly had time to write. I came home yesterday from Jackson, and found on my arrival a most agreeable surprise. What do you think it was, my dear mother? Nothing more nor less than your portrait; and a most admirable one it is, and a more acceptable present I could not have received. I would not part with it for a treasure. I kissed its dear face, and it seemed to look kindly at me, as you always did; and though the lips moved not, I thought I could see a blessing on them, just ready to be uttered. Anna never told me of it, so that it was wholly unexpected. It will be a source of great pleasure to me, and not a day will pass, in which I shall not gaze upon it, and think of the dear original. I thank you a thousand times for the present. I suppose A. has told you all about the matter at which I hinted in my last. I am going to do as my father did before me, marry a good and beautiful girl. What do you think of it? Will you give your consent and blessing? I know you will, and you will be pleased, too, with the fair being who is to be my wife. She is very beautiful, and as good as she is beautiful, and has already learned to love you as a mother, and Abby as a sister. We are to be married some time early in March. I expect we shall then go immediately to Washington City, where I have some business of importance, which will require my attention. Anna is going with us, and I do not doubt we shall have a most delightful journey. I do not know how long we shall stay in Washington, but it will be several weeks. However, Anna has, I presume, indeed she tells me so, informed you of everything in relation to the affair, and it is unnecessary for me to go into particulars. Mary W. is a noble girl, just such a one as you all will love, and feel proud of, and her mother is one of the best I ever saw, except my own. Anna loves them both dearly, and they fully respond to her feelings. Mary has one sister, a little girl at school, and two brothers, fine young men of excellent character and principles. Indeed, there is no family in the country that stands higher, or is more beloved, than Mrs. W.'s.

I do not doubt for an instant, that this change of condition will prove to me a happy one. Had I lived at home, or had you all lived with me here, I might, perhaps, have never thought of marrying. But here, far away from those I best love, I have become weary of the lonely and desolate life I have so long been leading. And now, I shall expect one of the girls to come and spend the winter with me every year. What say you, Abby? It will be your turn next winter. Will you come and see my sweet wife, and help me make her happy?

Anna is in fine health, and, with the exception of an occasional fit of sadness, in excellent spirits. She seems delighted with my success, and future prospects. She is a most notable house-wife, and has set the house in such fine order, that its future mistress will have but little to do. Her old friends have all renewed their acquaintance, and she has her hands full, between house-keeping and visiting. I wish you and Abby could drop in, and see how cosy and comfortable we are, in our delightful residence. Indeed I have had half a notion not to let Anna go home any more at all. This climate seems exactly suited to her constitution. Samuel is off on a hunting expedition; he has been gone several days, and we expect him back to morrow or next day. He seems to enjoy himself very much. He talks of returning to New York in two or three weeks. Well, I have gossiped enough, I think, for one time, so good bye to you, my dear mother, and to you too, Abby dear. Write me, with your own hand, and tell me how you like my plans. Anna joins in love.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

He was compelled to be absent at Jackson, on professional business, during several weeks of January and February. But the following extracts from letters to his sister will show that his heart was elsewhere :—

Thanks for your kind note of to-day, short though it was; and double thanks for the sweet inclosure it contained. You cannot conceive how slowly the sluggish hours drag themselves along in

this dull place. To me especially, they seem like so many full-grown years; and I join heartily with you in wishing there was no Jackson, to keep *brothers* from *sisters*, and *lovers* from each other.

I am becoming very impatient, I assure you, and long to leave this dreary place, and sit down between yourself and my sweet Mary, careless and forgetful of all the strange, cold world around us. Do not feel lonesome, dear sister, but keep up your spirits, and we shall have happy times, I trust, ere long. Good-bye, sweet; I do not know that I can send this in the morning, but will try.

Shortly after he writes :—

I had expected to go to Vicksburg this evening, my dearest Anna, but shall be disappointed. I am compelled to go into the country about twenty-five miles on some professional business, and hope to get back in time enough for the cars to-morrow, though possibly you may not see me till the day after. There is one comfort, however; the courts have all adjourned, and I shall not have to return to Jackson again. Are you not glad? I am overjoyed, notwithstanding much of my business remains unfinished.

I received your sweet, affectionate letter yesterday, my dear, dear sister, and it both pleased and pained me. It pleased me to read your kind, fond words of affection, and your sweet and generous approval of my love for M. But it pained me to know that the slightest feeling of sadness mingled with your joy. Still I know it is perfectly natural that these shadows should occasionally obscure the bright sunshine. In one thing you are mistaken, dearest; in supposing you are less necessary than heretofore to my happiness. You are mingled with all my future prospects, and if I thought my marriage with my own dear Mary, would, in one jot or tittle, affect my love for you, or deprive me of any opportunity of enjoying your society, or conducing to your happiness, I should shrink from the hour, to which I now look forward with such joyous anticipations. No; my own dear sister, my love for you is a part of my existence. Nothing can eradicate, or diminish it. It burns not less brightly

because another glorious lamp burns beside it. My love for Mary, which is little less than idolatry, is not greater in its kind than my affection for you. I only pray that her love for me may be as pure and bright as yours. Indeed, I would, *if possible*, love you more than ever; for to you I owe this great happiness now in store for me. I was proud, stubborn, reckless, and despairing, and should have lost the priceless jewel of sweet Mary's love, I do believe, had it not been for you.

There is an allusion in the following extract, to his reckless exposure of himself, during the ravages of the yellow fever in Vicksburg, the preceding autumn:

I have, from my boyhood, felt that it would be dangerous, if not fatal, for me to love. For this reason I have abstained from society. I have avoided your sex because I feared them. I knew that to love would make me wretchedly miserable or supremely happy. Oh! it makes me shudder to think of the terrible condition from which I have been rescued—my heart had almost turned to stone. I would have shaken the cold, skeleton hand of death as readily as that of a brother. I sought this grim, stern friend of the unhappy; but, thank Heaven! I found him not—for what a glorious change has come over me! Indeed, I can hardly believe in the reality of the past few weeks—I tremble continually lest I should awake and find it all a dream.

In another note, alluding to his mother, he adds:—"The recollection of her excellence and goodness has preserved and cherished all the good qualities, and repressed many of the bad ones, which belong to my character."

On the 3d of March, 1842, he was married to Mary Jane Williams, daughter of the late James C. Williams, of Natchez. Thus commenced a new and brighter era in his life. She, who was to be as a guardian angel to him thenceforth, still survives, and, therefore, must these pages

be silent concerning many things which might otherwise illuminate them with forms of beauty and goodness. The written memorials of his love to her, from the hour of their betrothment until his death, are worthy to be enshrined in amber; they betoken a purity, depth, and manly nobleness of affection, such as do honor to human nature.

Soon after his marriage he visited Washington City, accompanied by his wife and sister. From that place he wrote to his mother:

WASHINGTON CITY, *April* 11, 1842.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I have delayed, from day to day, writing to you, partly because Anna has written so often, and partly from having nothing new or interesting to tell you. Indeed, I hardly know now what to say, as I presume she has given you a full account of my marriage, our trip to New Orleans, our journey up the river, as well as everything which has occurred since our arrival here. I am very happy indeed, and do not doubt that I shall always have reason to rejoice at my change of condition. My health has not been very good for five or six months, and the state of the times is such, and my embarrassments arising out of it, that but for the happiness of having Mary and Anna with me, I should be quite discouraged. I did not wish to come on here, but was compelled to do so. We shall start back this week, about Thursday. I am anxious to get home, as my business there requires my immediate attention. It makes us all feel very badly to be so near you, and still unable to see you. Had it been possible, I should have come to Portland, though but for a day. I even fear that I shall not be able to visit P. this summer. My business presses me so heavily, and is of such a character, that I do not believe I can leave Mississippi. This will be a great disappointment to me, and equally so to Mary; for we had both set our hearts upon a good long visit. You may be assured nothing but necessity would induce me to forego the pleasure. For a couple of years I fear I shall have little time I can call my own. I am going hard to

work, and do not intend to cease until I can quit entirely. You must not feel too much disappointed if we do not come North this summer. And yet I don't know how I shall get over not visiting you. I wish you and Abby to see my wife *so much:* she is very beautiful and very good, and you will love her much, I know. Oh! how I wish we could all be together this fall; but it may not be, and we must comfort ourselves with the hope that another year will bring it about. Anna received a letter from Abby last night, and we were delighted to hear you were all well. Mary and Anna are both well, though they suffered a good deal from the fatigue of the journey. Tell Abby she must not forget me entirely. I have not received a letter from her for a long time. My kindest love to you all.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

The following letters show what frightful pecuniary distress and prostration of business at that time pervaded the country.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

WASHINGTON CITY, *April* 13, 1842.

MY DEAR GEORGE:—

I have been two weeks and a half in this place, and should have written you immediately upon my arrival, but that Anna wrote you a long letter so soon as we got here, and I thought I would postpone my epistle until we left, so as to inform you of anything which might occur in the meanwhile. We leave to-morrow, direct for Vicksburg, by the railroad and canal to Pittsburg, and from thence down the river by steamboat. I came on to Washington upon important business, which I have accomplished as far as practicable, and to as great an extent as I expected. I trust to reap a large pecuniary harvest from the successful issue of this business, which relates to a number of land claims of great value, and in which I have received a considerable interest (contingent upon success) for my profes-

sional labors. I am very anxious to get home, for my professional engagements, and the condition of my affairs generally in Mississippi, imperatively require my immediate attention. The condition of things in the United States, at this time, especially in the Southwest, is truly alarming. There is no currency, property has no representative, and is without any fixed value. A man in debt can see no mode of liquidating it, no matter how much property he may possess. If it were not for my profession, I should despair of saving anything; but that is of itself a fortune, and I, therefore, look forward with confidence, notwithstanding the gloom in which we are all enveloped. My professional prospects are better than they have ever been.

Well, dear George, I have now been married between five and six weeks, and am able to form some estimate of the new condition of life which I have assumed. I do not doubt that I shall be happy, and have continued cause to congratulate myself upon my good fortune. My wife is beautiful and good, with an almost child-like simplicity of character, united to a strong intellect, capable of the highest degree of cultivation, and as pure as truth itself. I am most devotedly attached to her, and I believe she fully reciprocates my affection. I see nothing, therefore, to prevent our future happiness. I have not been in very good health for several months past, and this, together with my business perplexities, has been a considerable drawback upon my enjoyment and has tended in some degree to depress my spirits. But when I get into my own house this will all pass away, and I shall be, I do not doubt, as happy as is allowable in this world—far more so than I deserve. I am delighted that you are coming home in the autumn, and shall insist upon your spending the winter with me, if mother will consent to spare you. Anna is going back with me to Mississippi, but she will return to Portland in a couple of months. Now you must come out in the fall, and bring her or Abby to spend the winter. I have a most delightful residence. I need not say how rejoiced we shall all be to see you. Dear Anna and Mary (my wife) have not been very well here, and both are anxious to get back to Mississippi. Washington is dull and uninteresting in every respect. There is some danger of war with England, though I do not

believe it is to be feared immediately. I fear, however, it will come before long. Anna and Mary unite with me in love to you.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *May* 5, 1842.

MY DEAR ANNA:—

I had not time, the day I arrived here, to write, except to Mary, as I went out early the next morning to Jackson. I stayed there a couple of days, and returned to-day. I shall not go out again till Monday. The courts will continue longer than I expected; but I shall be able to spend at least half my time at Vicksburg. You and Mary must come up immediately, at least as soon as you *can*. I am *sick* and *sad*, and feel so lonesome, that unless you come and cure me, I shall have to give up and go to bed. I have hardly ever felt so gloomy. Indeed, a deep gloom seems to pervade the whole country. Times never were known to be in so desperate a condition, and the prospect for a long period does not seem to brighten. For the first time in my life, I look with apprehension upon the state of things. But I shall make you sad too, by talking in this way. I found everything right at Cub Castle, and it only needs you here to put it in order. Your friends are all well, and anxious to see you. I have seen none of them except Major M's. family, but have heard, I believe, of all. There is nothing new here. The town is exceedingly dull, and likely to continue so during the summer. I shall expect you and Mary up the last of next week—if possible, before. I am dying to see you. Do, my own dear sister, come *very soon*, and cheer up

Your most affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

P. S.—Just consider, dear Anna, all the rest of this sheet filled with love.

S. S. P.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *July* 9, 1842.

MY DEAR ANNA:—

It has been now nearly a month since you left us, and though not a day, nor scarcely an hour has passed, in which I have not thought of you and regretted your absence, yet this is the first time I have gathered resolution to sit down and write you. I have been delaying from day to day, that I might give you some good account of my affairs. Times are much harder than when you left, and are growing worse every day. There is literally no money in Vicksburg. Not a cent can be collected or borrowed. Such times as we now have here, were never known in the United States; property has no value whatever, and all are equally poor.

Mary and I are both delighted that your trip was so much more pleasant than you anticipated, and hope the remainder will have proved equally agreeable; for I suppose you are at home by this time. You don't know how much we have both missed you, and how we long for your return. We consider it as a settled matter that you are to spend the next winter with us, and shall have everything ready for you and George. The house will be finished by that time, and you can't imagine how comfortable it is going to be. The workmen are getting along very rapidly. The whole frame is done, and the new roof finished. Mary's health is excellent, and you have no idea what a notable housewife she has become. My home is very pleasant, and were it not for the cares and annoyances of my business, I should be perfectly happy. Oh! I would give anything in the world if we were with all you dear ones in Portland; but it is useless to regret what cannot be remedied—and so we will hope for that happiness another time. Ever

Your most affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *July* 16, 1842.

DEAR GEORGE :—

I have not written you for more than three months, and have not received a letter from you for a much longer period. Anna writes so often, that I have pretty much surrendered my correspondence into her hands. However, I have been intending to write you for a long time, and have delayed from day to day, that I might be able to tell you I had raised some funds for you; in fact, I felt ashamed to write till I could do so. You can form no idea of the embarrassment, prostration and ruin, which pervade this country. Such a state of things never was known, and could not exist in Europe. There is no currency at all in this part of the country, and property has no representative. The New Orleans banks, which heretofore furnished this State with the little money that did circulate, have all failed, and now it is utterly impossible to collect debts, or to sell property at any price. Nothing can be more gloomy than the present posture of affairs; and I confess I can see no prospect of speedy relief. In every other country on the face of the globe, property will bring some price; here it will command nothing, and a man may starve in possession of a fortune. But a truce to business matters, and let the times take care of themselves. We will talk of something more interesting. How do you do, my dear brother, and how do you like the idea of coming home—leaving the Old World with its busy crowds and thronging associations, and once more trying this crude, unformed, democratic, wooden Western World? I trust things here will improve, so that after you have made us a good long visit, you can go back again. You don't know how glad we shall all be to see you. We have arranged all your plans for you. After you have spent a little time in Portland, you and Anna are to come out and spend the winter with me. My wife is not less anxious than myself to see you; and I shall be more than proud to show you your new sister-in-law. I am very happy in her society, and but for the cares and annoyances of business, should have nothing further to desire. Our love has increased since our

marriage, and I do not think either Mary or I have felt the shadow of regret that our destinies are united, or a single doubt of our continued love and happiness. Of all this, however, you shall judge for yourself, my dear George. Anna, as you know, spent the winter with us, and added greatly to our enjoyment. She left us about a month since for home. She went up the river, and by the way of the Virginia Springs, at which place I last heard of her. We miss her very much, and look forward eagerly to her return. Her health is excellent, and she wrote me from the Springs, that she had enjoyed her journey much.

There is nothing new here, except the continued depression of business, and the gloomy condition of the country, both in business and politics. The President is a traitor and a fool. May he meet a traitor's fate, unless the luck of the fool can save him. Good-bye, my dear brother. Mary joins me in love to you.

Your most affectionate

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

BELMONT, *Aug.* 17, 1842.

MY DEAREST ANNA:—

I am all alone to-day, and do not know how I can better occupy a solitary hour than in writing to you. Mary has gone to Natchez with her mother, and left me to keep house, a dull business enough as you may imagine. Mrs. Williams and Margaret came up and spent nearly two weeks; they returned on Friday last. As the workmen are all engaged on the house, and render it very uncomfortable by their noise and presence, I thought it a good time for Mary to make a visit below. Besides, I have some business to do at Jackson and Port Gibson, which requires me to be away for a week or more. After this is over, say in two weeks, I shall go down myself for her, and spend about a week at Natchez. We had a very nice visit from Mrs. W., and a short time before, one from Miss Eliza E. and Mrs. C. They are all delighted with Belmont. Indeed, you would hardly know it, so much have the improvements altered its appearance.

When finished, it will be the prettiest and most comfortable house in the State. I think it will be entirely finished by the first of November, and all ready for you and George. You will have your old room, which is decidedly the pleasantest one of all, and George will have a chamber opposite yours. All the windows up stairs, are to be cut down to the floor, and replaced by glass doors opening upon the gallery. My health is tolerable; I think a little better than it was when you left, though I am still feeble, and without appetite. The embarrassed condition of my affairs has annoyed me a great deal, and, I doubt not, contributed somewhat to depress me. However, I am not much given to despondency, from such a cause; and shall not allow it to trouble me seriously. The summer, so far, has been dull, though remarkably healthy, and has passed off as well as I could have expected. Mary is exceedingly kind and affectionate, and has done everything in her power to make me happy. I think she loves me more than when we were married, and whatever may be my fortunes, I believe she will prove to me as she has done, a most true, and loving wife. I am every way satisfied, and happy in her society, and if my health was a little better, and my affairs a little less entangled, I should have nothing to wish, except the presence of all you dear ones, to participate in my happiness. As I told you in my last, you and George must not fail to spend the winter with us, for I miss your society very much, and am fully as anxious for it, as before my marriage. Of this I wish you all, and you particularly, to be aware, that my marriage has not, in any degree, changed or lessened my affection for you, or altered in any way, my position in regard to each and all of you. You must not fail to write me as often as you used to do, and so must Abby. Your friends are all well, and often inquire about you. I trust your health will not suffer by the cold climate you are in. Be careful of yourself, my dear sister, and let me hear from you often. My best love to mother, and Abby, and Samuel, and yourself.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *November* 23, 1842.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

Your letter of the 30th ult. reached me to day. I had been long expecting from yourself, the announcement of your arrival—an event with which I was already acquainted through the New York papers, and also by a letter from Anna. I now lay all the blame of delay upon the mails, those pitiless monsters, that, like the fatal sisters, have no regard for mortal affections, and take no note of human feeling. I wrote you some five or six weeks since, and presume you have been treated as badly as I. I cannot tell you, my dear brother, how warmly I welcome your return. I am almost jealous, because I was not one of that affectionate circle which received you in its warm embrace. When I read dear Anna's description of your meeting with the loved ones, from whom you have been so long a wanderer, I wept, I almost thought from envy, but it was not so; it was from regret that I had not formed a segment of that happy circle; but after all it was a happy grief. You cannot tell how much I long to have you and Anna here. My dear Mary and I have set our hearts upon it, and have been all summer making our arrangements for your reception. Anna is to have her old room; you are to be located over the library, immediately opposite to her. I fear I shall be compelled to be absent a great deal on professional business; but Mary, and you, and Anna, will enjoy yourselves finely, and that will make me happy wherever I may be. My improvements are nearly completed, and I can offer you a more civilized reception, than what you met with when you visited me before. Oh! if I could only have you all to come and live with me, it would make me perfectly happy. For the last two or three weeks I have been absent, attending court at Jackson. Before I went, I took my dear Mary down to Natchez, on a visit to her mother. To-morrow, I shall go down to see her. I cannot bear a longer absence, and though I shall be able to stay only a day or two at the furthest, they will be days of very great happiness to me. I have never before been absent from my wife so long, and I am almost crazy at the idea of

seeing her so soon. I suppose you will laugh at this enthusiasm; very well, wait till you are in my situation, and then you will understand it. I think times are improving here somewhat, and I do not believe they will ever be as hard as they have been. We shall count the minutes till you and Anna arrive. My love to all the dear ones.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

The following note to his wife was occasioned by her narrow escape from a perilous steamboat disaster.

VICKSBURG, *Dec.* 12, 1842.

MY DEAREST WIFE:—

I wrote the inclosed last night, and on coming down in town this morning, found your dear and thrilling letter from Bayou Sara, giving an account of your misfortune and Providential escape. Oh, my dear, dear Mary, how thankful I ought to be for your preservation! Had any evil befallen you, I should never have forgiven myself for being away from you. I have heard how nobly and courageously you behaved, and am proud of your conduct, while I tremble to reflect on the danger that elicited it. Thank God, you will be with me, I trust, on Thursday, for I shall hardly believe you are safe till I hold you in my arms. I send this by the Missouri to-day, and trust you will get it in the morning. I am very well, though full of trepidation on your account. Good-bye, sweet, good-bye. May Heaven ever preserve, and bless you, as it has already done. My love to all.

Your most affectionate and devoted husband,

S. S. PRENTISS.

His correspondence in 1843 began, as usual, with a New Year's letter to his mother:

VICKSBURG, *January* 1, 1843.

MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER:—

I have delayed writing for the last ten days, in expectation of George's and Anna's arrival. The weather has

been so cold during December, that I fear they are frozen up somewhere on the way. I still expect them every moment. Mary and I are watching every boat that appears, with the hope of greeting the dear and long expected travellers. But I cannot wait any longer. To-day I must write to you and Abby, and wish you a happy new-year. My dear Mary and myself wish it from our hearts, and beg our dear mother and sisters to accept our warmest love. Oh! that you were here with us, this beautiful Sabbath. It is one of the most beautiful days you ever saw, warm and bright as spring; and the new year is fairly laughing itself into existence. Dear, *dear* mother, and *dear* Abby, my affection for you fills my eyes with pleasant tears, even now as I write. My heart is with you, though my body is not. What would I not give to know what you are doing, and how you are looking at this moment. It has been now more than a month since I heard from you, and I should feel alarmed did I not know the obstructions to travelling at this season, and account for it in that way. We are very well, though I have been a little indisposed. I have spent Christmas week at home; the rest of the time, for the last six weeks, I have been attending the courts. We have got our house finished, and it is now one of the pleasantest I ever saw. I think George and Anna will pass a delightful winter with us. Mary has prepared their rooms so nicely; and everything is now ready for their welcome. I am so glad they are to be with us this winter, for many reasons. In the first place, I shall be compelled to be absent a great deal on my professional business, and they will be such a comfort to Mary, who would otherwise be all alone; besides, she now needs A.'s kind attention, for I hope, my dear mother, that in a few months, when you pray for your dear children in Mississippi, you will invoke the blessing of Providence upon *one more* of the little family circle that is clustering around you, to love and reverence your declining years. Where, is S., and what is he doing? I have been thinking a good deal about him, and have come to the conclusion that it will be best for him to come out here. I have no doubt I can get him something to do, and shall be pleased to

have him live with me now. M. is anxious he should come. I will write again in a few days.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

Although Mr. Prentiss had withdrawn from public life, there was one subject which, during the years 1841, 1842, and 1843, often called him from his retirement, and was the occasion of some of his ablest addresses to the people. It also led to a good deal of political correspondence, of which the following letters, addressed to him in the early part of this year, will show the drift. The subject itself will occupy the next chapter. Judge Gholson, of the U. S. District Court, was a bond-paying Democrat, and had been one of Mr. Prentiss' opponents in the Mississippi contested election.

S. J. GHOLSON TO S. S. PRENTISS.

ABERDEEN, Miss., *March* 25, 1843.

DEAR SIR:—

I am anxious to know whether there will be a Whig candidate for Governor of our State, at the next election. The bond-paying Democrats here are ready to run Col. Thomas H. Williams, and he is willing to take the field, and meet the anti-bond question fully, if there is to be no Whig candidate. I am of opinion this course would more completely ensure the defeat of the anti-bond party than any other we could pursue.

My object is to defeat the repudiators, and I will with pleasure co-operate in the support of any man who can succeed over them.

I wish you to see such of your friends on this subject as ought to be consulted, and write me fully.

Your friend,

S. J. GHOLSON.

Gen. Duffield, now deceased, was a warm personal and political friend of Mr. Prentiss. For several years he edited the *Natchez Courier*.

J. M. DUFFIELD TO S. S. PRENTISS.

NATCHEZ, *April* 18, 1843.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Your letter of the 11th inst. has been in my possession some days. I have shown it, however, only to Bingaman and M. The former agrees with us—the latter does not. But the Whigs at large coincide precisely in our views, so far as I have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with their opinions.

I have written letters to R. Hughes at Jackson, H. R. Miller, Pontotoc, and Gen. Bradford, Holly Springs. I have received a reply only from Miller, who is quite with us; and who fortifies my opinions by his statement of the dissensions of our opponents in the north, and of the desire of many anti-bonders to support Williams, decidedly the most eligible man that could be started. With him as our candidate, receiving the hearty support of the Whigs, we can soon break up the unholy alliance between our goodly State and Repudiation—a wedlock of Beauty and the Beast.

Another reason, additional to those that have been urged, why Williams should be run, or rather why a bond-paying Democrat should be started, is this: Many of the anti-bonders are ashamed of their doctrines, their party, themselves. In supporting Williams, they can decently retire from the anti-bond communion; and, if they can thus save appearances, in God's name let us grant them the opportunity.

The quaking of our opponents at the bare mention of a union for the sake of the State, is a most significant symptom of the expediency of such union. With Whig candidates we *may* succeed (although I for one have not the least hope of it); with Williams, and other judicious selections (continuing Galloway, for instance), success is beyond a doubt. Is not certainty better than doubt? triumph, than hazardous speculation? As to na-

tional politics, can he be a true lover of his State, who weighs tariffs, distribution bills, even Henry Clay himself, the "embodiment of Whig principles," against his own immediate honor, bound as that honor is, to the redemption of the State. Gird on your armor, PRENTISS; you are the standard-bearer of Mississippi honor; your chivalry will wake the dead soul of pride beneath the ribs of the State; strike another good blow at the reeling cabal.

Dudley, of the *Southron*, and Hammett, of the *Whig*, are, I think, on the wrong track. Cannot they be brought to see the matter more calmly, and listen to reason, rather than that enthusiasm which animates them—a noble enthusiasm, indeed, but not of sufficient *clairvoyance*.

If they must hold a convention, are committed to it, perhaps it would be as well for the convention to adjourn officially, without making nominations, and then, meeting as a body of Whigs, urge Williams upon the consideration of our party. A strong address would aid in this matter. I fear that it will be impossible for me to be present at the convention, and, in truth, I am no friend to the project.

I should be glad to hear from you at your convenience. And meantime, and all the time, believe me, dear sir,

Your attached friend,

J. M. DUFFIELD.

Mr. Prentiss, as appears from this letter, strongly advised that the Whigs should unite upon a bond-paying Democrat, as their candidate for Governor. Unfortunately, his counsel was not followed, and an avowed repudiator was elected.

In the latter part of February, of this year, he enjoyed the gratification of a visit from HENRY CLAY, who, having spent the winter in the Southwest, was now on his return to Ashland. The veteran statesman was just then reposing for a little from the toils of public life; yet not without a strong hope, on the part of his friends, that, ere long, he would be summoned by his grateful and admiring

countrymen to the Chief Magistracy of the nation. Already, indeed, had the Whig party designated him by acclamation, as their next candidate, and so probable did he himself deem the event of his election, that Mr. P. one day remarked, playfully, "See, he is even now putting on Presidential airs!"

Mr. Clay was a man whose greatness did not vanish upon a near view. No one could hear him converse five minutes on public affairs, without feeling himself in the presence of a consummate statesman. His language was perfectly simple, his manner frank and easy, but he spoke with a method, precision, and quiet authority, which plainly betokened the habit of political judgment and command. One evening he and his host sat together, in the twilight, in long and earnest discourse upon the state of the nation. It was, however, more monologue than colloquy; the younger statesman obviously playing the part of a learner. The next morning he called my attention to the remarkable clearness, dignity, and patriotic spirit of Mr. Clay's observations, begging me to contrast them with the vague and bustling wisdom of ordinary politicians.

Mr. Clay reminded me strongly of Wordsworth, the poet, to whom I had recently paid a visit. They were nearly of the same age, and there were certain peculiarities of appearance, manner, and opinion in the one, which instantly recalled the other. Perhaps the impression, associating the two men, was increased by the circumstance, that I had heard Mr. Wordsworth also speak of our public affairs—particularly of repudiation, and its effect upon our national character abroad—in a spirit exactly in harmony with that of the great American statesman. The poet, as well as the orator, had reflected much upon political philosophy; he was at once liberal and conservative; he looked with abhorrence upon demagogues, and scorned the judgment of

the populace, literary or political, as sincerely as he respected that of the real people. He was, too, as his sonnets to Liberty give ample proof, an ardent lover of Freedom, and no passages in Henry Clay's appeals in behalf of Greece, or the South American Republics, surpass in eloquence and nobleness of sentiment Wordsworth's indignant outbursts in his celebrated tract on the Convention of Cintra. Mr. Clay, however, did not seem to feel so much flattered by the comparison with Wordsworth as one might have expected. He evidently knew far less of the great poet than the poet knew of him. But though rather impervious to my compliment, he observed, with not a little unction, that he had sometimes been said to resemble the Duke of Wellington.*

It was pleasant to watch the almost filial deference with which Mr. Prentiss treated his venerable guest, and the not less marked respect and affection which greeted him in return. He told me that few things of the kind had ever gratified him so much, or conveyed so high a compliment, as Mr. Clay's *mode of expressing his friendship for him.* Those who knew the imperial tone and temper of the Whig leader, and the somewhat dictatorial office which he at times assumed in guiding the party that idolized him, into what he deemed right paths, can readily appreciate the force of this remark.

Upon his arrival in Vicksburg, Mr. Clay had a brilliant public reception, at which Mr. Prentiss delivered the following brief address :

Mr. Clay : On behalf of the public authorities and citizens of Vicksburg, I bid you a hearty welcome to our city. We are

* It is related of Wordsworth that he was once persuaded to "show himself" to one of the curious tourists, who haunted Rydal Mount, by the person sending in word that there were *two men* in England he had longed to take by the hand—the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Wordsworth. He had seen the Duke; could he not now see Mr. Wordsworth?

much gratified that on your return home, you have afforded us the opportunity of exchanging salutations and of offering to you those assurances of respect and regard which we were able, only in part, to tender, on the occasion of your former momentary visit. No portion of your fellow-citizens have a higher admiration for your character, or a truer appreciation of your public services, than those in whose name I now address you. We behold in your reputation one of the richest jewels of the nation, which needs no setting of office to exhibit its rare brilliancy and value. Your philanthropy has embraced in its benevolent grasp the cause of human happiness throughout the world; your eloquent breath fanned the flame of Liberty as it burst forth, simultaneously, in two continents. Along the classic shores of Greece, the votary of Freedom

> "Still mingles in his grateful lay,
> Bozzaris with the name of Clay."

And among the mighty volcanoes of the New World, even in the tops of the Andes, your fame has built for itself a nest by the side of the eagle's.

But your philanthropy has not destroyed your patriotism. You have never forgotten, in your regard for other lands, that you had a country of your own. It is your true and patriotic devotion to that country which, more than aught else, challenges our esteem and admiration. Beyond any other statesman, you have discarded local prejudices and sectional feelings. Your heart is entirely and thoroughly American, and your aim has ever been the advancement of the interest and glory of the whole Republic.

It would, perhaps, be out of place, on this occasion, to go into a recital of the eminent public services you have rendered in the councils of the nation, during your long and splendid career. But I cannot refrain from saying, that I consider one of the greatest benefits you have conferred upon the country, to be the example you have furnished of what may be achieved under our institutions by the exercise of a patriotic and honorable ambition. Young men, as they read your history, and trace you from the poor boy leaving his Virginia home to seek fame and fortune

in the forests of the West, to the mighty statesman, upon whose words "listening senates hang entranced," will feel their breasts swell with new and strange emotions, and a noble emulation will urge them thenceforward to imitate the example of Henry Clay.

The highest reward of the patriot is the esteem and regard of his countrymen; this reward you are now enjoying. Station cannot command, wealth cannot purchase it. The spontaneous tribute which has just been rendered to your character by men of all parties, fills the measure of public honor. Even that high seat which millions eagerly desire you to occupy, would not add one cubit to the stature of your fame. Think not this is adulation. It is no less the interest than the duty of every country to acknowledge public worth, and we are proud in presenting Henry Clay to our brothers and sons as an example for their imitation, and to the world as a noble specimen of an American statesman.

A large portion of those who surround you, trust your public services are not yet completed; and that, as the first man in their regard, you may soon occupy the first place in their gift.

Permit me now, sir, to conclude my pleasant duty, and in the name of that portion of your fellow-citizens who have deputed me to bid you again a cordial welcome; and I know I express the sentiment of this entire assemblage in adding our united wish, that your days may be long in the land, and that a serene and happy old age may crown your useful and honorable life.

After reaching home, Mr. Clay addressed Mr. Prentiss the following letter in reference to the approaching election in Mississippi:

ASHLAND, *April* 27, 1843.

MY DEAR SIR:—

* * * * The goodness of our cause; the badness of that of our opponents; the dishonesty of repudiation; the divisions, both on local and general questions, among our opponents; the moral action within and without the State in regard to the obligations of honor and good faith; the flight of G——,

and the suicide of his less guilty confederate; all these causes must give you victory at your next election. When I had the pleasure of being with you, you thought it would be the best policy, if the Democratic Convention would nominate a bond-paying Democrat, to make no opposition, but support the nomination; and you said as much to some of the delegates to that Convention. But they did not make such a nomination, and their failure absolves you from all obligation in the matter.

And now what is best to be done? Will you pardon me for making a suggestion? It appears to me, that it would be the wisest to run Whig candidates who are in favor of paying the State debt, for all the important offices. If you attempt to run Democrats, who are for paying the bonds, many Whigs, some from principle, some upon pretext, will refuse to vote for them, because they are Democrats. It is easier to draw to the Whigs the honest Democrats, than it is to carry the mass of the Whigs to them; because there is less difficulty in moving a few than many. And I must say that, I think, it has been the vice of the Whig party, frequently manifested during the last eight or ten years, that they have too often sought to ally themselves to the odds and ends of other parties, instead of resting upon the strength of their own numbers and their own patriotic principles. What sacrifices have they not made to gain Anti-Masons, even Abolitionists, &c. &c.?

I wished to bring this view of the matter to your consideration. At the same time, I know that your superior knowledge of local causes and circumstances makes you much more competent to judge than I am.

I recollect, with great pleasure, the agreeable hours I recently passed under your roof. * * *

Be pleased to present my friendly regards to Mrs. Prentiss, and your sister and brother.

I am, truly and faithfully,

Your friend and obedient servant,

H. Clay.

Reference will be made in the next two chapters to several

incidents of a public nature, which belong to the year 1843. The reader may get a glimpse of his domestic history, during the same period, from the following letters :

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

BELMONT, *July* 4, 1843.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

Here I am at Belmont, all alone, spending my Independence Day in waiting for the evening train of cars for Jackson, whither I am bound to attend the courts. A week ago I took Mary and dear little Jeanie down to Natchez, tarried with them several days at Longwood, left them there, and came back day before yesterday. We have all been well since your departure, except a little complaining on my part, which, however, amounts to nothing. A little rest is all I want, and that I am determined to take presently. I shall go down to Panola in two or three weeks, and intend to spend a month or six weeks there. By that time the waters will have fallen in the lake, and the fishing will be admirable; so I do not doubt I shall enjoy my visit much. Jeanie, dear little thing, is increasing rapidly in all good nurture and admonition. She is already notorious through the regions hereabouts as the finest child extant, and I believe I have become equally notorious for my boasting and vanity on her behalf. We were delighted to hear that Anna enjoyed herself so much in Louisville. To you, I presume, so much visiting was rather a bore. Mary received letters from Louisville and Cincinnati, and I got one yesterday from Cumberland, for which dear Anna has my thanks. I had intended saying something about political matters, but have hardly room, so I will pretermit it at present. By this time, of course, you are safe and happy at home, where I wish I could join you.

Here is a specimen of his letters to his wife, written during his occasional absences from home. The "Nation" refers to the Choctaw Indians :

JACKSON, *July* 9, 1848.

MY DEAREST WIFE:—

I start to-morrow evening on my trip to the Nation. I have a nice little buggy, with a top to it, and a good horse, all loaned me by a friend; so I shall have a much pleasanter time of it than if I was on horseback. It will take me three days to go and the same to return. I do not expect to be detained there more than two or three days; still I may have to stay a long time. On my return, I suppose my business will hold me about ten days at Vicksburg, and then, ho! for the lake, for my dear wife and sweet little daughter, for Mary and Jeanie. Absence has taught me the full value of the treasures I possess at home. All the rest of the world looks poor and miserable. Indeed, my dear Mary, my distaste for the world is growing so strong upon me, that I fear its results; it has almost unfitted me for business, and will, I am afraid, grow into a confirmed habit of misanthropy. But the less I love the world, the more I love you and our child—our bright spring child. You cannot imagine how much I am attached to her. I find myself continually thinking of her. I see her lying on the floor crowing away, and striving to express, both by sound and gesture, her tiny thoughts. I see her in the bath, splashing the water with her little hands and feet, her eyes glancing and sparkling, half with fear and half with delight. In imagination, too, she has grown many months older, and climbed my knee and kissed me, and lisped in my ear her childish hopes and wishes. Even this is not all; sometimes I behold her in full maturity, beautiful and good like her mother; shedding light and happiness upon all around; dividing with you your household cares, and with her sunny smile dispelling all the clouds which may lower upon us. What do you think of my presentiments? Will they not turn out true? I have been pretty well since I left you, and have got rid of all complaint, except weakness. I suffer from lassitude, and indisposition for exertion, which, however, is readily attributable to the excessive heat of the weather. I long to hear how you come on at Panola, how your health and spirits are, how much Jeanie has grown, whe-

ther she has changed in appearance, what she has learned, &c. &c. &c. I have received no letter since the one by the Buckeye, last Monday. I shall not write from the Nation, unless I can get a private conveyance, for the mails cannot be relied on, and I shall get back before a letter can come. My kind remembrance to all the family. Kiss dear Jeanie for me till you get tired. To you, my own dear wife, as much love as you can bear.

Your most affectionate and devoted husband,

S. S. Prentiss.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

Vicksburg, *Sept.* 3, 1843.

My Dear Sister:—

Mary is writing to George, and I see no reason why I should not give you a chance of receiving a letter as soon as he. I wrote from Natchez, three or four weeks since, and Mary intended to do the same, but she had quite an attack of fever, and has been so indisposed ever since, as to prevent it till to-day. She is now rapidly recovering her strength, which is all that is required to make her perfectly well. I suppose she has mentioned the wonderful visit we have had from Natchez. Belmont has been right gay during the past week, I assure you, and Mary and I were continually regretting that you were not here to participate in the enjoyment. Mrs. P. has not been from home before for twenty-five years. All the ladies seemed to enjoy themselves, and expressed great delight at their visit. Jeanie is improving wonderfully. I would give anything in the world if you could all see her. She weighs eighteen pounds, can sit alone, and almost stand, and I verily believe will talk in a month. You never saw a child with so much vivacity. Her eyes and ears are constantly on the alert, and she eagerly investigates all she hears or sees. She wakes up regularly at daybreak, and commences crowing, and has already acquired the trick of pulling my hair to wake me, thereby intimating her dislike of my lazy habits. She is a dear,

sweet, funny little thing, and a great comfort to her father and mother, as she will also be this winter to her aunt Anna, to whom, they say, she bears a very considerable resemblance. It has been, and still is, unusually healthy here. I never knew it more so. My own health is somewhat improved. Your friends are all well, and inquire about you unceasingly. My best love to you all.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *Sept.* 26, 1843.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

I returned day before yesterday from New Orleans, and found a letter from you, awaiting my arrival. Mary had already prepared me for its contents, which I devoured, as you may imagine, with no ordinary degree of interest and pleasure. And so, sweet Anna, you have thought proper to follow the example of your wise brother. * * * Well, it is not good for man to be alone, nor woman either; and though sometimes selfishness has whispered how gratifying it would be to Mary and me, should you continue a member of our own family, and gladden our fireside with your continual presence, yet I have ever wished, even at the expense of this great blessing, that you might some day be called to fulfill a higher destiny, to become the centre of a domestic circle of your own, within whose bright, warm precincts all should be happiness and love. I am glad, very glad, and if a slight pang accompanies my joy, it arises from my great affection for you—say, regret at losing you, and a sort of jealous fear at seeing your happiness placed in the hands of another. That he whom you have chosen is worthy and good, I cannot doubt; you could not love one who was not. * * * I welcome Mr. S., then, as a brother; and so long as he loves you, I cannot fail to love him. If his affection for you is as great as mine, I shall be satisfied, and so, I think, will you. To your union I give my willing consent, and upon it invoke Heaven's choicest blessings. May the clouds which have

sometimes obscured your sky, be for ever dissipated. May the earth continue to look as pleasant, and the moon and stars as bright, as they now do. Even as you sympathized with my sorrows and rejoiced in my joy, so, my dearest sister, do I sympathize and rejoice with you. Mary and I grieve that you cannot be with us this winter; still we are content that our loss shall be your gain.

Since commencing this, I have got a letter from G., announcing his engagement. Why! what is the matter? Has matrimony become epidemic in the family? Dear me, what billing and cooing there must be up Danforth street. Love and her pigeons must have built nests in those old elms. How does mother stand such carryings on? * * * But I have not said a tithe of what I intended. So I will presently write you another and longer letter. Write me particularly all about your several engagements, when you expect to be married, &c. &c. Mary and I are dying to hear more, and more and more still about it. We have laughed and cried by turns. Jeanie is well, and beautiful, and good. We all send love without limit. Mary wrote yesterday, and will write again soon.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Oct.* 1, 1843.

MY DEAR GEORGE:—

I wrote Anna two or three days since, and intended writing you at the same time; but was called away again on business, which has occupied my attention ever since. I have just returned from church with Mary, and hasten, at this earliest opportunity, to send you our congratulations and benediction upon the happy event which your letter of the 13th ult. announces. We both rejoice most sincerely in the successful issue of your attachment, and invoke upon it all the blessings which belong to a pure and reciprocal love. In winning a true

woman's love, you have obtained the greatest prize in this world's lottery. God bless you both, my dear brother, and sister soon to be, I trust. The hollowness of the world, and the vanity of its pursuits, all but fools will soon discover. Love comes nearer than aught else to filling the craving void which exists in every human heart. You are richer now than if you had found a mine of gold. * * * God bless you again, my dearest brother, and bring to a happy fruition the bright hopes in which your heart now indulges. But I hardly know what to say. My mind has been quite agitated for the last few days, with feelings of surprise and pleasure, mingled, perhaps, with a little selfish regret. Altogether, however, I am happy, truly happy, in this great family *convulsion.* * * * Mary and I both shall be overjoyed if you will spend the winter with us; provided you do not make a sacrifice of your own feelings in leaving Portland. We are not so selfish as to ask you to come to us, if you have any other plans. I am, however, of opinion that this climate will be of service to you; so I join Mary, and say, *Come.* Jeanie is a beautiful little flower, and the petals of her heart are already sufficiently open to receive the dews of goodness and virtue. Come, then, my dear brother, and as early as you can. I shall be much absent on business, and you will take care of Belmont for me, when gone. I am several letters in arrears to you; but your last has driven the others out of my head; so I shall say nothing now of your fine trout-fishing at the Great Brook (though I envied you the sport and the associations connected with it) or of your other movements during the summer. I will not write further at present; but you shall hear from me soon again. We are all well; and Vicksburg is remarkably healthy. I was compelled to visit New Orleans about two weeks ago, and suffered no inconvenience from it. I got my desk in good order, and am highly pleased with it, as well as the chair. My commission could not have been better executed. And now good-bye. My love to all the dear ones. Mary has just written you herself, and joins me in all I have said.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

VICKSBURG, *Oct.* 27, 1843.

MY DEAR ANNA:—

Since I wrote you last, I have been nearly all the time away from home. About two weeks ago, I took Mary and Jeanie down to Longwood, while I went out to Jefferson County to Court. I returned to Natchez, and we were all coming up together, but missed the packet. As I was not willing Mary should come on an up-country boat, I had to leave her, but shall go down to day after her. While at Natchez, I got your letter informing us that you expected to be married by the middle of November. * * * There is nothing Mary and I would not give to be with you, as you were with us, sympathizing in your happiness, and invoking upon your dear head all the blessings which belong to a union of good and loving hearts. But though we cannot be with you in person, dearest, our hearts and wishes will be there. When you think of us on your bridal day, you will know and feel, that in spirit we are present among the guests, smiling upon you; and that thought will make you less sad, because you see us not. You cannot know how much we grieve at losing your society this winter. Mary is not yet reconciled to it, and even dear little Jeanie seems to be aware how much she has lost. Your friends everywhere express much regret that they will not see you, and complain as bitterly as if you had committed a personal injury. You must write me very often from your new home, and tell me all about your house, your town, your parishioners, everything that interests you; for it will, on that account, be interesting to me. There is nothing new here. The sickness is over, and we are all well. The weather is getting quite cold, and we have already had frost. And now, my dear, dear sister, may God bless you, and smile upon your nuptials. The good wishes and the blessing of your brother you already have; and whatever fortune may betide you, you know his feelings towards you can never change; he will rejoice in your joys, and weep for your sorrows. My love to dear mother, and to you all.

Most affectionately your brother,

SEARGENT.

CHAPTER XX.

Mississippi Repudiation—Mr. Prentiss' Opposition to it—His Popular Addresses on the Subject—Argument at Fayette against the Doctrine that one Generation cannot bind another—Col. Joseph B. Cobb's Reminiscences of a Speech at Jackson before the Whig Convention of 1843—Letter to the Poet Wordsworth—Mr. Wordsworth's Reply—The Question of Repudiation finally decided by the Supreme Court of Mississippi.

1840–1843.

No one can peruse Mr. Prentiss' speech in the Legislature, on admitting Delegates from the New Counties, or that in Congress, on the Mississippi Contested Election, without confessing that he was imbued with a deep feeling of veneration for law and public order. An act which appeared to him palpably wrong, whether perpetrated by one man or by a million, was certain to encounter his open and unqualified hostility. Never, indeed, was his oratory more effective than in denouncing the violation, or vindicating the sanctity, of contracts, chartered rights, and constitutional obligations. It is not, therefore, surprising, that he should have waged an early, uncompromising, and relentless war against *Repudiation*. His abhorrence of it amounted to a passion so intense and withering that, for several years, it consumed his peace, sundered old friendly ties, and embittered the very springs of life. To the day of his death the scars of this terrible conflict remained upon his heart, unhealed. From the first he regarded Repudiation as a malady *cnse recidendum*, and not to be dealt with on ordinary methods. "My advice," he writes, "is, that the Whigs

make it a *social* and a *business* contest, as well as a political one.

It will be the aim of this chapter to present an authentic statement of his connection with this unhappy question. There is no part of his public life, concerning which he would have been more anxious that the exact truth should be told, or which does greater honor to his memory; and, fortunately, there is none which can be placed in a clearer light. During the winters of 1842–3 and 1843–4, he often conversed with me on the subject, expressing in particular his views of the theoretical source of the evil. For many of the advocates of Repudiation justified it, not merely on the ground that the Union Bank Bonds, as they said, were illegally issued, or sold; they went further, and boldly defended it on the principle that *one generation cannot bind another*. In establishing this proposition, they cited the opinion, or rather speculation, of Mr. Jefferson,* whose authority among them, like the coun-

* Mr. Jefferson's doctrine is fully expounded by himself in a letter to Mr. Madison, dated PARIS, *September* 6, 1789. It is a striking illustration of the mania for political experiment and innovation, which then raged in the Parisian clubs, and was just organizing itself, with such terrific power, in the French Revolution. A few extracts will show its spirit:

"The question, whether one generation of men has a right to bind another, seems never to have been started, either on this or our side of the water. Yet it is a question of such consequence as not only to merit decision, but place also among the fundamental principles of every government. The course of reflection in which we are immersed here, on the elementary principles of society, has presented this question to my mind; and that no such obligation can be so transmitted, I think very capable of proof. I set out on this ground, which I suppose to be self-evident, that the *earth belongs in usufruct to the living;* that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it. The portion occupied by any individual ceases to be his when he himself ceases to be, and reverts to the society. * * * If they have formed rules of appropriation, those rules may give it to the wife and children, or to some one of them, or to the legatee of the deceased. So they may give it to his creditor. But the child, the legatee, or creditor, takes it not by natural right, but by law of the society of which he is a member, and to which he is subject. Then, no man can, by *natural right*, oblige the lands he occupied, or the persons who succeed him in that occupation, to the payment of debts contracted by him. * * * What is true of every member of the society individually, is true of them all collec-

sel of Ahithophel, "*was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.*" It was no doubt partly owing to the effective use which he saw the repudiators making of this perilous speculation, that Mr. Prentiss often gave it as his deliberate opinion, that Mr. Jefferson, notwithstanding his great services, had done more than any other man to unsettle and injure the political temper of the American people.

The first record of Mr. Prentiss' warfare upon Repudiation is as early as March 14, 1840. In his message to the Legislature in January of that year, Gov. McNutt recom-

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tively; since the rights of the whole can be no more than the sum of the rights of the individuals. To keep our ideas clear when applying them to a multitude, let us suppose a whole generation of men to be born on the same day, to attain mature age on the same day, and to die on the same day, leaving a succeeding generation in the moment of attaining their mature age, all together. Each successive generation would, in this way, come and go off the stage at a fixed moment, as individuals do now. Then, I say, the earth belongs to each of these generations during its course, fully and in its own right. For if the first could charge it with a debt, then the earth would belong to the dead, and not to the living generation. Then no generation can contract debts greater than may be paid during the course of its own existence.

"What is true of generations succeeding one another at fixed epochs, as has been supposed for clearer conception, is true for those renewed daily, as in the actual course of nature. As a majority of the contracting generation will continue in being thirty-four years, and a new majority will then come into possession, the former may extend their engagements to that term, and no longer. The conclusion, then, is that neither the representatives of a nation, nor the whole nation itself assembled, can validly engage debts beyond what they may pay in their own time; that is to say, within thirty-four years from the date of the engagement.

"On similar ground, it may be proved, that no society can make a perpetual constitution, or even a perpetual law. * * * Every constitution, then, and every law, naturally expires at the end of thirty-four years. If it be enforced longer, it is an act of force, and not of right."

It would be hard to carry the atomic, say rather the atheistic, theory of government beyond this. The reader will find the whole of this remarkable letter in the *Memoir and Correspondence* of Thomas Jefferson, edited by his grandson, vol. iii. p. 27. He will also find a very sensible and luminous refutation of its fallacies, in Mr. Madison's reply. See Tucker's *Life of Jefferson*, vol. i. p. 292.

Mr. Jefferson, it will be noticed, makes a generation, competent to contract debt, last thirty-four years. His Mississippi disciples appear to have based their estimate upon another set of "the bills of mortality;" for they applied his doctrine to justify the repudiation of the Union Bank Bonds, in less than *three* years after the faith of the State had been pledged for their payment!

mended that the charters of all the banks in the State should be repealed; at the same time pointing out, with much force, the gross abuses which, he alleged, had crept into their management, especially into that of the Union Bank.*

The *animus* of this recommendation best appears from the following Resolutions, which were immediately introduced into both branches of the Legislature:

Whereas, in the first section of the Constitution of the State of Mississippi, it is declared that all freemen, when they form a social compact, are equal in rights, and that no man, or set of men, are entitled to exclusive, separate public emoluments, or privileges from the community, but in consideration of public services; and that all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and established for their benefit, and they have, at all times, an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter or abolish the form of government in such manner as they may think expedient.

And whereas, since all free governments derive their authority

* "The faith of the State is pledged for the whole capital stock [of the Union Bank], and the property of all her citizens may hereafter be taxed to make up its losses and defalcations. The right of the people, therefore, to know the conduct of all its agents and the liabilities of every one of its debtors, cannot be questioned.

"An examination of the list of stockholders of the Bank will show, that not one voter out of thirty in the State has obtained stock. Should the residue of the bonds ever be sold, the stockholders alone will be benefited by the sales. Is it consistent with the principles of justice, does it comport with good faith to render the property and persons of forty thousand freemen liable to be assessed to raise money for the especial use of thirteen hundred citizens, many of them men of great wealth, and none of whom have any peculiar claims to Legislative favor?

"The exercise of the repealing power is not in its nature judicial. The same power that grants charters, is competent to repeal them. Public policy and convenience authorizes their creation, and if experience proves them to be detrimental, we are required to recall the privileges granted. Severe penalties should be imposed for banking, after the repeal of a charter. The issuing of paper, in contravention of the repealing act, could be effectually checked by *the abrogation of all laws now in force, making it penal* to *forge* such paper. The existing Banks cannot be bolstered up." The chartered banking capital of Mississippi, at that time, amounted to *more than fifty-six millions of dollars*.

from the people, and are instituted for the preservation of their liberty, and promotion of their happiness, and as the functionaries of the government are simply the agents of power, appointed by the people, under a responsibility to perform their will, they, as contra-distinguished from the body politic, do not possess one particle of power. *It follows*, that all laws which grant to the few the power to oppress the many, are contrary to the principles of freedom, and repugnant to the rights of the people—and therefore *repealable* by the SUPREME AUTHORITY.

And whereas, a Bank Charter, from its nature, extends and necessarily confines the powers and privileges granted to the few, to the exclusion of the many ; therefore, if the powers and privileges, granted in a bank charter, operate against the public good, it is the duty of the Legislature, as the agents of the people, to revoke such charters. Therefore,

Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Mississippi, that from and after the passage of these resolutions, it shall be deemed lawful and competent, to alter, amend, or abrogate any act of incorporation, which has been, or may hereafter be, granted under or by the laws of this State, or which is, or may be, found to exist within the territorial limits of the same, under any name, or for whatever purpose, whenever, in the opinion of the Legislature, the public good may require such alterations, amendment, or abrogation.

In accordance with these resolutions, an anti-bank bill, of a highly revolutionary character, was framed, and forced through the House, against the formal protest of its weightiest members. All professed themselves favorable to a thorough reform of the banking system of the State ; but the majority were determined to effect it in a summary way, and by usurping the functions of the judiciary ; the minority argued that such a method would be essentially unjust, would fail to cure the evil, and, in the end, would infect the body politic with a malady yet deeper and more virulent than the original disease. The bill was finally defeated in

the Senate. But hardly had the congratulations ceased, which wise and good citizens exchanged with each other upon the event, when Gov. McNutt issued his notorious Proclamation, announcing to the world, that the State neither could nor would pay the bonds issued under her great seal and signed by himself, in her name, on account of the Union Bank.* What American citizen, then sojourning

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* The history of the Union Bank is briefly this: It was incorporated, on the 21st day of January, 1837, under the title of "The Mississippi Union Bank," with a capital of $15,500,000; which capital was to be "raised by means of a loan, to be obtained by the Directors of the Institution."

The 5th section of the act of incorporation declares, "that in order to facilitate the said Union Bank, for the said loan of $15,500,000, the faith of this State be and is hereby pledged, both for the security of the capital and interest, and that 7,500 bonds of $2,000 each, bearing interest at the rate of 5 per cent., shall be signed by the Governor of the State, to the order of the Mississippi Union Bank, countersigned by the State Treasurer, and under seal of the State."

On the 5th day of February, 1838, in accordance with a constitutional provision, this *fifth* section of the statute, whereby the faith of the State is pledged, was re-enacted by the Legislature, and approved by the Governor.

On the 15th of February, 1838, an act of the Legislature was passed, entitled "An act supplementary to an act to incorporate the subscribers to the Mississippi Union Bank."

The chief argument against the liability of the State to pay the bonds, was, at first, that they had been sold in violation of the supplementary provision, which declares that "said bonds shall not be sold *under their par value*." Gov. McNutt took this ground; he did not repudiate the bonds as *unconstitutional*. But this argument could not stand; for although nominally sold under par, yet in consequence of the high rate of exchange between Jackson and New Orleans (where the payments were made) the State actually realized *more* than the "par value." The bonds sold amounted to $5,000,000.

The legal argument of the anti-bond party assumed, in time, a much more substantial and plausible shape. They contended that the Union Bank was not organized under the original act, approved on the 21st of January, 1837, and 5th February, 1838; but under that act, *and* the "supplementary act," approved 15th February, 1838; that the supplementary act made many important changes in the original act, whereby the ultimate liability of the State was increased, and her security greatly lessened; and that as the law, making these changes, had not been passed by two successive Legislatures, the whole statute, original and supplementary, was thus rendered null and void.

Mr. Prentiss contended that the "supplementary act" did not materially change the liability of the State; that its provisions were directly in order to carry out the intention of the original statute, and were strictly within the constitutional power of the Legislature; that it in no way pledged the faith of the State for the payment

1,500,000

in the remotest corner of Christendom, or heathendom, will ever forget the sting of indignant shame which that proclamation shot into his heart!

But nowhere did it excite such shame and indignation as in Mississippi; nowhere did its sentiments encounter such earnest, patient, and heroic opposition. If there is a body of men in the United States entitled to the moral respect and admiration of the American people, it is the noble band of Whig and Democratic bond-payers in Mississippi. Hardly had Gov. McNutt's Proclamation appeared, when a public meeting of the citizens of Adams county was called in reference to it. Adams was one of the oldest counties in the State, paid heavier taxes than any other, and was not more distinguished for wealth than for the intelligence, weight of character, and patriotic spirit of its population. The meeting was one of the largest popular assemblies ever seen in Natchez, and was fitly presided over by Col. Adam L. Bingaman—a native and honored son of the State. Ex-Governor Poindexter first spoke. Mr. Prentiss then addressed the people, in enforcement of the following preamble and resolutions:

Whereas, in the late Proclamation, issued by the Governor of this State, purporting to be in reference to sales or transfers of the State Bonds, now in possession of the Union Bank, a most violent, wanton, unwarranted, and unjustifiable assault upon the credit of our State, our character for honesty, and regard for public and private faith, has been made, in his express asseverations o the inability of the State to pay her debts, and her

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of the Union Bank Bonds, there being no occasion for renewing that pledge, and therefore no necessity for referring it to another Legislature; and, finally, that granted the supplementary act did modify or repeal important provisions in the original statute, as alleged by the advocates of Repudiation, even that would not free the State from a perfect constitutional, legal, and moral obligation to pay the bonds.

There will be reference to the Planters' Bank Bonds in the sequel.

unwillingness to do so, were she able, under which imputation we will not silently rest: Therefore—

Resolved, That we, as citizens of this county, utterly repudiate and denounce this slander upon the honor of the State; and that we doubt not, nor do we hesitate to assert, that every county in the State will rebuke this attack with the just indignation and contempt that we feel.

Resolved, That the fit prototype of the Proclamation—Gov. McNutt's recommendation to legalize forgery, was an insult to the Legislature, an injury to the State, and must be regarded as infamous by all who hold dear the reputation of Mississippi.

Resolved, That as citizens of the county of Adams, we repel the calumny that we are neither willing nor able to redeem the public obligations, as far as they may fall upon us; and that we are satisfied that the whole State must despise and condemn the allegation of the Governor, and will vindicate her honor and honesty.

An intelligent gentleman, who was present, writing the next day, describes the speech as "upholding the honor, dignity, and character of Mississippi in a manner which entranced the audience. Mr. Prentiss is an honor to the American nation. He is now, in the morning of his fame, and long may he live to use those high endowments, that belong only to the truly great!"

This was, probably, the first public meeting ever held in the United States to denounce Repudiation. Many Democrats, as well as Whigs, were present, and openly avowed their hostility to the Proclamation; while, in most other States of the Union, the great body of the Democratic party regarded the doctrine with as much detestation as their political opponents. The memorable words of Mr. Calhoun expressed not merely the sentiment of that great and pure-minded statesman, or of the gallant State to which they refer; they expressed the substantial feeling of the wisest

and best men of all parties, throughout the country. They only echoed the real voice of the American People :

> I pledge myself that South Carolina will pay punctually every dollar she owes, should it take the last cent, without inquiring whether it was spent wisely or foolishly. Should I in this be by possibility mistaken—should she tarnish her unsullied honor, and bring discredit on our common country, by refusing to redeem her plighted faith (which I hold impossible), deep as is my devotion to her, and mother as she is to me, I would disown her.

A collection of Mr. Prentiss' principal speeches on the Bond Question, correctly reported, would be a lasting monument to his legal attainments, the fervor of his patriotism, his dauntless courage, and the nobleness of his political principles. Several of these speeches were among the greatest he ever made ; and all of them were marked by an extraordinary energy and elevation of tone. Whenever he spoke on this subject, he resembled more an old Hebrew prophet than a modern politician. With unsparing severity, and as if specially commissioned by Heaven, he warned the people against the demagogues, who were trying to lead them astray, set before them the sin of violating the public faith, and plainly foretold the disastrous consequences which would spring out of their endorsing such a policy. He denounced it as alike foolish and wicked ; it would prove, in the end, as fatal a robbery upon their pockets as upon their character. In this strain he, during four years, everywhere lifted up his voice ; it mattered not whether he was addressing a polished audience at Natchez, a knot of loiterers at the corner of the street in Vicksburg, a gathering of backwoodsmen, or a crowd well sprinkled with the repudiating legislators at Jackson ; he never varied his speech, except to lash the iniquity with rebukes still more scathing, when he saw its authors or abettors before him !

It is not my business to defend the terrible severity of language which he allowed himself in attacking Repudiation. On this point the reader must exercise his own judgment. But Mr. Prentiss deliberately justified himself, on the ground that, as the evil assaulted the very being of society, it was entitled to no quarter; that it was a sort of moral treason to parley with it. And yet his bitterest speeches against Repudiation were so full of wit, humor, and splendid eloquence, that they fascinated the very men upon whose heads he was pouring out the vials of his wrath!

He was not always, however, in the denunciatory mood. Sometimes his tone was mild and persuasive; his manner, "sweet as summer;" his argument, addressed to the heart rather than the head. At such times, the effect of his appeals was irresistible. Forgetting, for the moment, the darker side of his subject, and borne upon the pinions of reason and strong imagination, he would soar into the sphere of ideal truth, and thence shed down light and beauty upon his wondering auditors! Or, taking them by the hand, as it were, he would draw tears from their eyes by portraying, with a pathos whose deep sincerity none could doubt, the sad misfortunes which Repudiation had brought, and would continue to bring, upon thousands of poor men and women, widows, and orphans, old soldiers and sailors, retired upon their little all from the storms of life; upon illustrious poets and divines too—men, whose good opinion could add weight to the character of a nation. "Such are the persons," after this manner he would proceed, "such are the persons, fellow-citizens, who have entrusted their earthly subsistence to the protection of *your* laws; who have confided in the great seal of this young and chivalric State; many of them are scattered among the beautiful hills and valleys of our mother-country. Shall their reli-

ance upon our honor, upon our plighted faith, be put to shame? You, mothers and daughters of the land—you, in whose bosoms the vestal flame of patriotism never goes out—what response do your fair lips give to this question? But I know what response you will give. It is that which your venerated mothers—those glorious dames of the Revolution—true Deborahs and mothers in Israel, would have given before you! Indeed, you are more interested in the success of right principles than we of the sterner sex; for you would lose more by their defeat. Your own holy instincts prompt you in this matter. You know that the high destinies of your sex can only be accomplished under the protection of good government, and the genial influence of a settled social organization. You shrink with natural horror from the disorganizing doctrines and wicked practices of the Repudiating party. God bless the fair ladies of Mississippi! They fight against our enemy even as '*the stars in their courses fought against Sisera!*"

For the following spirited description of one of Mr. Prentiss' speeches on Repudiation, the reader is indebted to Joseph D. Shields, Esq., of Natchez:

The first time I ever heard him was at what might be called a glorification meeting, at Jackson, called to celebrate the Whig triumph of 1840. I confess his effort did not come up to my expectation, and the remark was made that he had not done himself justice. The only part of his speech that impressed me, was that in which he begged the old line Democrats and the old line Whigs to keep their armor untarnished by the blight of Repudiation.

It was by mere accident that I was at Fayette on the occasion to which you allude. It was noised about that PRENTISS was to speak, and instantly the Court House was crowded. The subject was one of vital importance, and he laid out his whole

strength upon it. During the delivery of the speech, he was frequently interrupted by a very zealous repudiator, a man well known in the community, and old enough to be his father. These interruptions were extremely annoying to the audience, a majority of whom were warm admirers of PRENTISS. He, however, never for an instant lost his equanimity; and while the crowd were shouting out, "Down with him!" "PRENTISS!" "PRENTISS!" "Out with him!" "Down! down!" your brother, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, "begged his fellow-citizens to allow his venerable friend to proceed, as he would be glad to hear him."

The scope of the old man's remarks was to make the Whigs *particeps criminis*, by having aided in the creation of the banks. "That's the very point I'm coming to," said PRENTISS. "In this matter, fellow-citizens, I know no Whig nor Democrat. I know those only who uphold the principles of honor, and the plighted faith of Mississippi." After repeated attempts to embarrass the speaker, in every one of which his guns were adroitly turned upon himself, the old gentleman, who was perfectly sincere in his opposition, picked up his hat in a rage, and left the Court House, saying, as he left, that he had taken a "blue pill" that morning!

Mr. PRENTISS' speech was not so much an argument on the constitutional question, but rather a condemnation of the spirit of lawlessness, which was becoming so prevalent. Giving to the candidates then before the people credit for honesty of intention, "Still," said he, "they were mere *bobs* upon the surface, showing where the big fish were nibbling at the bait below." The war now waged against the bonds of the Union Bank, involved a principle which, consistently carried out, would lead inevitably to the repudiation of all chartered rights, debts, and public obligations. His main attack was upon the doctrine, boldly advanced by some politicians of the State, that the Union Bank was created by one generation, that another generation had come into existence, and therefore ought not to bear the burden of liquidating debts they did not contract, and the benefits of which they did not enjoy.

I can only give you a few of his ideas, for no stenographer could report him. Admitting, then, said he, the principle, how are you going to apply it? Who can mark where one generation begins and another generation ends? The stream of time has a continuous, everlasting flow; you cannot separate its particles, and say, this much belongs to your generation, and this to mine. The life of society is one and immortal; it cannot be thus broken into disconnected fragments. Besides, how dare we claim and enjoy the innumerable benefits derived from our ancestors, if we repudiate the obligations they imposed upon us? Our liberty, our constitution and laws, our social institutions, our very roads and bridges, our public buildings, all won for us by the toil, sacrifices, or blood of our fathers, how can we have the face to appropriate these vast benefits, and not take the incumbrance which they bring with them? In truth, every good thing that we have is mortgaged; earth, sea, and sky—aye, the very air we breathe, as disease and sickness can bear witness. We inherit no blessing, no right or advantage, which is not ours in trust, which is not linked to some duty. But it is vain for me, at this late day, to attempt even a brief synopsis of his remarks. All I know is, that he made the most powerful and brilliant argument I ever listened to. His propositions were so plain that a child could understand them; and his elucidation grew brighter and brighter at every step. The garlands that his glowing fancy wove and scattered over his theme, never marred the simple majesty of the argument; they seemed, in fact, to give it strength, while they enhanced its beauty.

At the opening of the address, I observed two old men (I think one was a Whig, and the other a Democrat) plant themselves directly in front of the speaker, one on either side; as he proceeded their attention became riveted; they pressed forward and gazed into his face, as if they thought him inspired. Before he had concluded, I saw them weeping like children! When he had finished, one exclaimed, "Ain't he the greatest man that ever lived?" The other said, "If I could make such a speech as that, I would be willing to lie down and die the next minute!"

These, of course, were extravagant encomiums; but I give them as specimens, to show the wonderful effects of his eloquence.

I know not what preparation he had made for this masterly effort. He certainly had no idea of speaking when he went to Fayette, as he was there on professional business. It was, if I mistake not, at that term that he defeated the hopes of a young man, who was seeking to break his father's will. I was told that after the jury had returned a verdict against him, the son came to Mr. PRENTISS and used language of the following purport. "Well, Mr. P., you have taken my property, you have blasted my prospects; but that true and beautiful tribute you paid to the memory of my father, almost repays me for all that I have lost."

Another speech, which produced a deep impression at the time, was made at Vicksburg, Nov. 6, 1843. The occasion was a public discussion between himself and a gentleman of the Democratic party, who has since attained high distinction in its ranks, upon the constitutionality of the Union Bank Bonds. His address was remarkable for the superb imagery, in which he described the mystic chain that binds together the different generations of mankind, and preserves unbroken the moral life of society. It was his last public assault upon Repudiation. Even while he was speaking, the question was being decided at the ballot-box, and in favor of the anti-bond party.*

The reader may be amused with the following editorial

* A gentleman of legal distinction, who heard this speech, writes, Dec. 12, 1853: "Your brother was ridiculing and denouncing the notion that one generation could not bind another, and called on any one to explain what was meant by the proposition. Major ——, who had never before appeared in public, undertook to state what the doctrine on that point was. Your brother's response was the most courteously severe and magnificently eloquent thing I ever heard, even from him. But it was ten years ago, and nothing is left on my mind but the vivid impression of the power and beauty of the speech. We heard him *then* every day, and did not specially mark and treasure up his great sayings."

notice of this speech, taken from the *Vicksburg Sentinel*, a leading organ of the Democratic party in Mississippi. It appeared in the paper of Nov. 7, 1843

According to agreement, the Hon. S. S. PRENTISS and Major ———, met in public discussion, at the Court House yesterday. We are not prepared to give an outline of the arguments used, or the points relied on, by either party. Suffice it to say, that it was an honorable, gentlemanly, fair discussion as to the constitutionality of the Union Bank Bonds, creditable to the parties, and the cause.

Mr. PRENTISS certainly made the best, and most logical argument we have ever either heard, or read AS EMANATING FROM THE BOND-PAYERS, and stating that our plain planter successfully maintained his position against S. S. PRENTISS, is saying that Major ——— is no *ordinary man*. It is needless to assert that Mr. PRENTISS has not changed our views on the Union Bank Bond question, and that *we think* his arguments will not bear the process of analysis; but we must admit they were specious, plausible, and no doubt, to many would seem convincing. In saying that S. S. PRENTISS is a great man, that, deservedly, he should be at the head of the party, not alone in Mississippi, but throughout the Union, let no one accuse us of any sinister motive. We express our sentiments of the gentleman *now*, merely for the purpose of showing the gigantic Goliah, with whom our little David has had to struggle, and the honor that is due him in coming out of that struggle untouched and unscathed. Out of it untouched has he come, and in our opinion triumphantly, successfully, and honorably.

The necessity which Major —— was under of visiting some of the precincts where votes were being received, prevented a prolongation of the discussion. To review some of Mr. PRENTISS' propositions, we had resolved; but as the decision of the people on the bond question is now in pendency, and there is no further time for hearing counsel on either side, we decline doing so.

For the following additional account of Mr. Prentiss' course on Repudiation, and of a speech delivered by him at Jackson, in 1843, I am indebted to Col. Joseph B. Cobb, of Lowndes County, Mississippi, a gentleman distinguished not less for his literary culture and attainments than for his social worth. The reader will not blame me for retaining the interesting introductory notices :

LONGWOOD, near Columbus, Miss., *May* 8, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR ;—

Your favor of the 30th March reached me some weeks since, and I beg you to believe that nothing but engagements of a pressing character, would have so long delayed my reply to the inquiries you therein proposed. Nor do I feel certain that I am even now fully prepared to give you a satisfactory answer, because your inquiries embrace much that might well occupy a history rather than a letter.

I became intimately acquainted with your distinguished brother more than ten years since. His name, his fame, and his person were known to me many years previously, but it was not until January of 1842, during my service in the Mississippi Legislature, that I formed with him that close tie of mutual regard and friendship, which I fondly believe lasted to *his* dying day ; whilst, on *my* part, it has survived the intervention of death. He was then in the full bloom of manhood. Disease had not attacked his constitution, and his unusual vigor of health, and remarkable capability for enduring physical labor and exercise, were observed by all who knew him. His strength, even considered independently of his lameness, was truly astonishing. I was told that he had sometimes, when in a hilarious humor, been seen to lift stout men in his arms, and seat them on beds or tables, just as the frolic of the moment suggested ; while, as a walker, few were able to tire him down. I have ridden in his company on horseback, and although he generally mounted a spirited animal, I never knew him to lose his balance, or meet with a fall. I mention these facts because many have supposed

that in consequence of his well-known infirmity, he was not fitted for athletic exercises.

But it was the eminent social worth, the amiable qualities of heart, and the unswerving tenacity and sincerity of his friendships, which made your brother so beloved by all who enjoyed the honor of knowing him intimately. Many of his warmest and most devoted personal friends were found, too, in the ranks of that party whose principles he daily denounced with such violence, and ridiculed so scathingly. Among these, not feeling that I violate any rule of decorum or propriety, I may mention the distinguished name of John Anthony Quitman. It seemed to me that your brother really loved this gentleman; and it was evident to all who ever saw them in company, that the feeling was reciprocal.

As to your brother's course, in relation to the unfortunate subject of Repudiation, I think I may safely say that he led off in the first speech that was ever made to any considerable audience in Mississippi in opposition to that most pernicious and unworthy doctrine. This speech was made in the Hall of the House of Representatives, by especial invitation, during the adjourned session of the Legislature in January of 1841.* He was not then a member, but the address was made to the Convention of the bond-paying party. I regret to say that I did not enjoy the pleasure of hearing this speech; but a mutual friend, Dr. J. M. Cunningham, of Noxubee, who is a gentleman of high

* The meeting at Natchez, however, was some ten months earlier. In the course of 1841, too, he addressed the people on the Bond Question whenever he had opportunity. The following letter, signed by a number of the most respectable citizens of Jefferson county, shows in what light he was regarded by the Anti-Repudiators:

"HON. S. S. PRENTISS. "FAYETTE, *Sept.* 19, 1841.

"DEAR SIR:—

"We, the undersigned, some of whom heard your speech at Vicksburg, some time since, on the Bond Question, in which you proved that the State is constitutionally, legally, and morally bound to pay her bonds sold on account of the Union Bank, most respectfully request a copy for publication in *The Bond Payer*, published in this place, and edited by G. Earl Martin, Esq.

"We have ever looked upon you as the *leader* (permit us to use the term) of the great Whig party in this State; and now, as Whigs, we claim that your views on this question may be made public as above requested."—ED.

attainments, and as fully alive to the impressions of eloquence as any person, has often spoken of Mr. PRENTISS' effort on that occasion as being one of the most powerful and splendid of those wonderful flights of oratory which distinguished his public career, and which marked him as *the man* of his generation.

The elections of that year, however, resulted most disastrously to the bond-paying cause. The question of Repudiation usurped respectability, and signally bullied contempt. Gov. Tucker was borne into the chair of chief magistrate of the State by a majority that left no doubt as to the popularity of the doctrine, and which thoroughly disheartened the party who had supported the payment of the Union Bank Bonds. Notwithstanding the eminent private worth of Gov. Tucker, and his deserved popularity as a citizen, the two succeeding years seemed to cast a dark shadow over the character and destinies of the State, which evidently disquieted the advocates of Repudiation, while those who differed with them felt almost ashamed to leave the borders of Mississippi. Prominent among those who openly proclaimed the latter sentiment, was your illustrious brother. Even during his visits to New Orleans, where much of his business was transacted, he sought shelter from the gaze and curiosity of the people, candidly declaring that he felt really ashamed to receive any public testimonials of esteem, "*so long as the black flag of Repudiation waved triumphantly over the fertile plains and rich valleys of his adopted State.*" This is his own strong and figurative language, and I well remember the deep emphasis and subduing eloquence with which he uttered the bitter thought. No one could ever have learned to imitate the manner and tone with which, when laboring under aroused sensibility, he used to pronounce the word *Repudiation*. It seemed as if the concentrated disgust of a whole party was thrown into the effort. His expression was that of a man who loathed some nauseous draught that necessity forced him to swallow; while the natural lisp that impeded his utterance would be prolonged into an angry hiss, more startling than that of the coiled serpent.

Notwithstanding the signal defeat of 1841, the bond-paying

party rallied gallantly for the gubernatorial conflict of 1843. A State Convention assembled at Jackson, in June of that year, of which Colonel Bingaman was President. Your brother was also a member, being a delegate from the county of Warren. At this time every office in the State, from the highest almost to the lowest, was in the hands of the anti-bond party, save alone the bench of the High Court of Errors and Appeals. Of this lofty tribunal, Wm. L. Sharkey, Esq., present United States Consul at Havana, was Chief Justice. His elevated standing, his eminent and acknowledged ability, his purity of character, and his general popularity, turned on him the eyes of the whole Whig party of the State, as being the most suitable candidate that could be offered to the people for the office of Governor. There was scarcely to be found a single man of his party who was not pressing his nomination. The members of the Convention were very nearly unanimous in his behalf; and when the Nominating Committee was raised, no one entertained the shadow of a doubt as to the result of their deliberations. Mr. Prentiss had not been present at the forenoon session of the Convention, being engaged in the argument of a very important case before the Superior Court of Chancery. He had been named as a member of the Nominating Committee, and accordingly met that body at noon. He was surprised, indeed almost deprived of his equanimity, when he found that Judge Sharkey was about to be invited from the bench of the Supreme Court to become a candidate for Governor; and, mainly through his exertions, the Committee reconsidered their action, and brought into the Convention the name of another candidate for that high office. This created a perfect furor of dissatisfaction among the members of that body. Complaints and murmurs arose from all quarters of the hall. No one objected to the gentleman who was offered, but nearly everybody preferred Judge Sharkey. During all this excitement, Mr. Prentiss, clad carelessly in a plain summer suit, his collar open, and his fine flowing locks streaming unarranged, and almost wildly, sat perfectly calm and silent. The time had not arrived at which he decided to mingle in the strife, and assign the reasons for his

conduct. At length, a member addressed the President, and proposed to strike out the name of the person reported from the Committee as the candidate, and to insert that of Wm. L. Sharkey. The motion was not even seconded, before Mr. PRENTISS sprang, rather than rose, to his feet, threw his well-known stick in its accustomed place, to support his infirm limb, and advancing energetically to the front of his desk, began to pour forth one of those powerful and overwhelming torrents of eloquence for which he has become so famed. The peculiar sound of his cane, as he limped along from his seat (a sound which is well remembered in Mississippi, and which never failed to draw universal attention whenever, during his service in Congress, he entered the Hall of Representatives), at once stilled the audience into the most perfect silence. Every one could see that the humor was upon him, and that he had been touched by the magic wand of his ministering Genius. He assaulted the motion as striking a death-blow at the already crippled character of Mississippi. With more than usual skill, he drew a graphic picture of the whole army of repudiators, "with their ragged, pirate flag, borne shamelessly in the midst of them, advancing in swarms to do their murderous, infamous work." He described them as "Huns, guided by leaders who owned all the atrocious principles of Attila without possessing his courage or his talents." Alluding to the defeat which the bond-payers had sustained at the last elections, he spoke, with power unsurpassed, against that policy which dictated to us, "after having lost the main battle, and been driven back from every post and routed at all points, to draw our greatest leader from the strong citadel of the Supreme Court, to encounter an uncertain fate in a hazardous campaign." This citadel unsurrendered, he declared that the "wild beast of Repudiation" was restrained from striking, at least, the last fatal and irrecoverable blow on the already prostrate name of the State. "Here, after having scattered his vile foam, and exhaled his pestilential breath in every other quarter, he could at last be muzzled and strangled." He then spoke with deep feeling of the purity, learning, and spotless character of Judge Sharkey, and declared that "the honest men

of Mississippi could not spare him from the bench at such a time." His court "was the last refuge left under the inflictions of this worse than Egyptian plague," and they would rise up in one solid mass to protest against his being surrendered—against the "letting go of our only hold, to flounder amidst the uncertainties of a political campaign." He said, with an expression of countenance that thrilled the audience, that "Judge Sharkey should not be forced to soil the pure ermine of judicial eminence by seeking an engagement with this unclean monster." Still, he continued, it was "essential to fight the beast, pestiferous as it was." He had read in Roman history that the march of a whole army had been once arrested by coming in contact with a huge serpent, whose very breath poisoned the entire atmosphere around them. Regulus halted his columns, and decided that safety called for the destruction of the monster, even though many human lives should be the forfeit. If the serpent, as was naturally to be expected, should follow on their march, the whole army must inevitably be swept away by pestilence; and thus, day after day, were detachments drawn out, until the destroyer was in turn destroyed." "Our march," he continued, "to fame and to greatness as a State had been impeded by the intervention of this vile serpent of Repudiation." "Its hiss was heard from every hill and through every broad valley of Mississippi. Already its venom had blighted their blooms and freshness; the very air by which they were nourished was corroded with poison, and sure death seemed to be the fate of all who ventured within the tainted precincts. One only spot was safe from its noxious influences, and we should guard closely every avenue of approach, rather than open the way for the incursion of the fell destroyer. He should be fought by the subordinates, the rank and file of the army, but that all America would curse and ridicule the policy which the adoption of the resolution in question must force upon the bond-paying party."

This, my dear sir, is a very tame and imperfect account of one of the most transcendent speeches to which I have ever listened, or ever expect to listen again. Some allowance for this imper-

fection is due me, however, in consideration of the many years that have elapsed since the period of its delivery. I would occasionally try to charge my memory with some striking and beautiful illustration as it flowed from the speaker's lips; but, like all present, I was too much captivated by the continuous roll of oratory, and the splendid outbursts of genius, to store away any particular expression. What I have here given is correct, and was gathered entirely from the general impressions which rested on my mind; and I will venture to say that it is the first time a single line or thought of that matchless effort was ever put on paper. I fear that there is some risk in my endeavour to do so, but I felt that you were entitled to all that I remembered.

The speech lasted several hours; at its close, the mover of the resolution jumped up with a precipitancy that excited universal merriment, and withdrew it by general consent, declaring his motive to have been only to test the sense of the meeting. When Mr. Prentiss began, I believe, that if the resolution had come to a vote, it would have largely prevailed, so great was the confidence in Judge Sharkey's ability, and in his *avail*ability. But the favorite of Mississippi had placed the matter in a new light, and when the speech was ended, Judge Sharkey could scarcely have obtained a vote for the nomination, even had he desired, beloved, as he certainly was, by every member of the Convention.*

The life of such a man as S. S. Prentiss ought not to remain long uncommemorated. Were I to undertake to write all I know and think of in connection with it, my memoranda would fill a volume. I sincerely hope, dear sir, that this rambling, and but for its subject, I should fear, very dull letter, may give you some small aid in carrying out your most worthy and fraternal

* An intelligent gentleman, who heard this speech, and also the two which preceded it on the same day—that before the Chancery Court, and that before the Nominating Committee—declared that *either of the three* was "enough to immortalize its author."—Ed.

design. And now, wishing you every success, I beg leave to subscribe myself

Your friend and obedient servant,

JOSEPH B. COBB.

The following letter will explain itself. It was written, it should be observed, before the election, which resulted in the final defeat of the Bond-payers.

S. S. PRENTISS TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI, *Feb.* 5, 1843.

MY DEAR SIR:—

My brother, who has just returned from abroad, informs me that, while in England, he enjoyed the gratification of paying you a visit, during which he learned that some members of your family were interested to a considerable amount in certain Mississippi bonds, which you considered worthless, supposing them to have been repudiated by the State of Mississippi. I take great pleasure, at his suggestion, in giving you some information on the subject. There are two classes of Mississippi bonds, issued at different periods, and for different purposes. One class has been repudiated by the legislative body, but the other has not been; nor is the validity of this latter class questioned at all. It is true no provision has been made during several years for the payment of the interest; but this neglect has arisen from other causes than that of repudiation.

The bonds in which you are interested, I perceive by a memorandum of my brother's, belong to this class. Their validity is acknowledged on all hands; nor has any pretence ever been set up of illegality, or irregularity—either in their inception or sale. *I have no doubt of the ultimate payment of these bonds, both principal and interest;*—and in this opinion I am sustained by all intelligent men in the country. How soon provision will be made for their liquidation, it is difficult to predict with any certainty. I am of opinion that in two or three years, the State will provide for the payment of the

interest, and place the ultimate payment of the principal beyond all cavil. I would, therefore, advise the holders of this class of Mississippi bonds to avoid sacrificing them.*

The doctrine of repudiation has had a momentary and apparent triumph in this State; but its success was accidental. It is not an exponent of the opinions of a majority of the people; nor is there the slightest danger of the principle becoming permanent. Indeed, it receives no countenance amongst honest and honorable men, and it is my deliberate opinion that four-fifths of the people of this State utterly abhor repudiation, and look upon its supporters as the advocates of fraud and dishonesty. But you will perhaps say this opinion is paradoxical; your Legislature, under your form of Government, is chosen by the people, and expresses its will. This Legislature has, by a deliberate act, repudiated a portion, at least, of the public obligations. That act is the act of the people. How, then, can it be said, that four-fifths are opposed to what all have done? I admit the force of the question, and the apparently anomalous character of my proposition; still it is correct—I know it is so, from my own observation; and in this case it has happened—as it does frequently in others—that a measure may be carried in the legislative body, at variance with the wishes and opinions of four-fifths of the electors. In the present instance, repudiation resulted out of a contest between two political parties, though it formed no element of either. These two parties were very equally divided, and a slight influence was sufficient to give to either the preponderance. At this juncture, a few reckless and profligate demagogues, observing the embarrassed and distressed state of the country, which was then at its height, seized upon the idea of repudiating the public debt, and threw it, as make-weight, into their own side of the political scales. A few persons, for the most part among the ignorant and credulous, alarmed at the

* The bonds referred to were those of the Planters' Bank. Some years after the date of this letter, a few of these bonds were accepted by the State, I believe, in payment of certain dues. But nearly the whole of them, amounting now, principal and interest, to several millions of dollars, remain still unpaid; nor has any provision been made for their liquidation.—Ed.

thought of increased taxation, which the demagogues told them would consume all their substance, and excited by artful appeals to their prejudices, and bold assertions of fraud on the part of the purchasers of the public bonds, were led away by this dishonest doctrine, and thus enabled their false leaders to succeed in placing their party in power.* Thus the repudiators, though but a small body, and wholly incapable, as a party by themselves, have been able, by holding the balance of power between the two great and legitimate parties of the State, to foist themselves into temporary importance and apparent success. But those who made use of them, are already ashamed of their infamous allies, and repudiators are now repudiated by all honest and honorable men.

* A brief editorial of the *Vicksburg Sentinel*, of Nov. 7, 1843, will show the sort of argument and appeal here referred to:

"THE WORK GOES BRAVELY ON.

"Far as we can see, the gallant 'Subterraneans' are doing their duty manfully and well! The battle will be well fought, and if the enemy gain the victory, it will be well earned and hard won.

"Stand up to the rack to-day, boys! Let those who did not vote yesterday come forward and do so to-day; and let those who have voted, and who love the cause, aid in bringing up our corps of reserve to the charge. On, Anti-bondmen, on! Old Warren, and the City of the Hills, must be rescued!

"Your birthrights, and those of your children, are at stake; if you are men—if you cherish the great fundamental principle which your fathers proclaimed, July 4th, '76—if you wish to give the death-blow to funding and consequent taxation throughout the world—if you have humanity enough not to increase the pangs of starvation, under which three-fourths of your fellow-beings in bond and king-ridden Europe are writhing—go, we say, to the polls to-day, and record your vote against the iniquitous system. The present crisis is no ordinary one; the issue is not confined to Mississippi—no, it is a contest in which is marshalled, on one side, a *privileged aristocracy*, *moneyed influence*, bonds, and endless taxation; and, on the other, *Freedom*, *Justice*, and *Humanity!* One rally, one charge, and the victory which is now in sight will be ours!!"

How long the writer of this patriotic effusion had been in the United States, I do not know. He was an impulsive, warm-hearted Irishman, and was soon after killed in a duel. His predecessor in the editorship of the *Sentinel*, was Dr. James Hagan, also an Irishman, and far superior to poor Ryan in ability. He was, indeed, a man of a good deal of intellectual vigor, extremely bitter, like most foreigners of his class, in his hatred of England, and a violent Repudiator. He was killed in a street affray growing out of an editorial article.—ED.

In times of great public distress, I have no doubt the doctrine of repudiation will be advanced by unprincipled politicians, in the different States, and perhaps, occasionally, with apparent and temporary success; but I feel perfectly certain, that it can never become permanent in any State. It cannot obtain as a public policy, until a majority of the people cease to be individually and privately honest. Notwithstanding the disgrace and obloquy which have, to a certain degree justly, fallen upon this State, its citizens are, in the main, honest, and look upon the authors of their degradation with as little favor as you do.

I owe you, perhaps, an apology for going beyond the object of my letter (which was simply to inform you that the bonds you hold have not been repudiated by the Government, and that I believe they will be ultimately paid); if so, I trust I shall find it, in my desire to relieve at least a portion of my countrymen from the imputation of intentional dishonesty in the eyes of a poet and philosopher, whose good opinion is capable of adding weight even to the character of a nation.

If I can at any time serve you in this, or any other matter, it will afford me much gratification to do so.

Very respectfully,
Your obd't servant,
S. S. PRENTISS.

To WM. WORDSWORTH, Esq., Rydal Mount, England.

P S. As I am, of course, an utter stranger to you, I will refer you to Mr. Everett, the American minister at your Court, in relation to the weight which should be attached to my opinions on this subject, should you deem it of sufficient importance to give them any consideration.

I cannot refrain from giving Mr. Wordsworth's reply, although addressed to myself, as it affords a glimpse of the unhappy effects that have followed the non-payment of the Mississippi bonds in the case of thousands, whose grievances never reached the public ear. Grace Darling was the "heroine" alluded to in the letter.

May the day speedily dawn which shall witness the last vestige of Repudiation on American soil! And Heaven forbid it should ever again be desecrated by such an evil! Better that whole cities be engulphed by an earthquake. Vanished cities could be rebuilt, and again become the abodes of prosperous men; but what power can wipe out the "damned spot" of public fraud and dishonor?

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH TO THE EDITOR.

RYDAL MOUNT, near AMBLESIDE, *March* 23, 1843.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Your letter, which had for some time been rather anxiously looked for, reached me by yesterday's post. I sincerely thank you for it, and for the pains which you have so kindly taken upon the subject. Nor are we less indebted to your brother for his letter, and for his entering into particulars in the manner he has so considerately and fully done. I feel unwilling to trouble him with a letter, judging that my acknowledgments will be as acceptably conveyed through you. Pray let him know how much we are obliged to him; and say that, for many reasons, we shall be glad to hear from him again, as soon as anything materially affecting the question may occur. The personal interest which I attach to it is not on account of the sum of money that is at stake, as the condition of the proprietors, two of whom, a brother and sister of Mrs. Wordsworth, are advanced in life, and one has a large family; and both, owing to various misfortunes, are in very narrow circumstances. The other owner is my only daughter, who is married to a gentleman that has been very unfortunate also. I repeat these particulars, mentioned, I remember, when I had the pleasure of seeing you at Rydal, because I should be very unwilling to give your brother and yourself so much trouble upon a slight occasion. Nothing remains for the suffering parties but patience and hope; for as to the proposal so kindly made of seeking redress through legal process, in which your brother offers his assistance, they have no funds for acting upon that; besides, they could not

think of availing themselves of an offer which could not be carried into effect, even were it successful, without occupying your brother's time and thoughts in a way which they would feel unwarrantable. All that you both say respecting the depth and extent of the indignation excited in your country by this shameless dishonesty, we most readily believe; and upon that belief we rest our hopes that justice will be done. But in matters like this, time, as in the case of my relatives, is of infinite importance, and it is to be feared that the two individuals, for whose comfort payment is of the most consequence, may both be in their graves before it comes. Let but taxes, to amount however small, once be imposed exclusively for discharging these obligations, and that measure would be hailed as the dawn of a coming day; but until that is effected, the most sanguine must be subject to fits of despondency.

It gives me much pleasure to learn that you found your mother and sisters in such good health upon your return. What a joyful meeting must it have been after so long a separation. What you say of the nervous fever under which you have been suffering gives me great concern. Had it anything to do with the climate of your country, very different, perhaps, from what you had been accustomed to in Europe?

I cannot but wish that you had seen more of the *mother* country; it is our old English phrase, and I rather grieve to see that many of the present generation, fond of aping German modes of thinking and speech, use father-land instead. England is certainly the portion of Europe which is the most worthy of American regard, provided it be diligently and carefully noticed and studied.

I send (by way of slight return for your and your brother's kindness) to each of you the last verses from my pen. They were written about three weeks ago, and a few copies struck off for circulation among my friends. I should not like them to be printed, even in America, for they would be sure of finding their way instantly back to England, before, perhaps, I disposed of my own little impression as I could wish. Since the lines were composed, I have heard that our Queen and Queen Dowager

have both subscribed pretty largely for the erection of a memorial to the memory of my heroine upon the spot where she lived and was so nobly distinguished. She is since dead. What a contrast, as you will see, does her behavior present to the inhumanity with which lately, upon the French coast, certain shipwrecked English crews were treated.

Mrs. Wordsworth joins me in kind remembrances, and we beg that our respects may be presented to your mother and sisters, and believe me to remain,

Sincerely and gratefully, your much obliged,

WM. WORDSWORTH.

NOTE.—Since this chapter was written, the question of Repudiation has been finally decided by the highest tribunals of Mississippi. These decisions affirm, in the most unqualified manner, the legal and constitutional validity of the Union Bank Bonds, and the perfect obligation of the State to pay them. The matter first came before the Superior Court of Chancery in a suit instituted on one of the bonds, and on the 21st February, 1853, Chancellor Scott delivered an elaborate opinion, asserting their validity, and rendering a decree accordingly for the amount of the bond sued on and interest.

From this decree the State's Attorney appealed to the High Court of Errors and Appeals, in which Court the cause was argued with much ability, on the 16th, 17th, and 18th days of May, 1853, by D. C. Glenn, Attorney-General, on the part of the State, and by D. W. Adams, Esq., a gentleman whose indefatigable zeal against Repudiation deserves lasting praise, on the part of the appellee. The cause was at length determined on the 30th day of July, 1853, by a unanimous opinion and decision of the Court, affirming the decree of the Chancellor, and holding the State liable for the payment of the bonds. See "State of Mississippi *vs.* Hezron A. Johnson, &c. &c. Jackson: Thomas Palmer, printer, 1853."

The opinions of the Chief Justice, Hon. C. Pinckney Smith, and

of the Hon. Wm. Yerger (Hon. E. S. Fisher, the other Judge, concurring in them), as also that of Chancellor Scott, are extremely able, and reflect lasting honor upon the independence, learning, and high character of the Bench of Mississippi; any State in the Union might well pride herself upon such Judges. All the main points taken by Mr. Prentiss in his speeches against Repudiation ten or twelve years before, are here established with a clearness and authority beyond cavil. What will be the practical result of this decision is not yet plain. It was hailed with profound satisfaction all over the Union, as a pledge that the stain of Repudiation would be soon wiped away; the friends of that policy having uniformly asserted the illegal and unconstitutional character of the bonds, and challenged the advocates of their payment to test the matter before the judiciary of the State. But it is said that in the notable gubernatorial election of 1853, which ensued shortly after the adjudication of the cause the Repudiation policy was still adhered to, the opinion of the Supreme Court denounced, one of the Judges dropped, and the candidates of the Anti-bond party triumphantly chosen. It is hoped that this was but the impulse of the hour, and that ere earnestly to be long the people of Mississippi, uninfluenced by the clamor of demagogues, and honoring their own recorded will, as constitutionally expressed by their highest tribunals, will cheerfully arrange with their creditors for the payment of both the Planter's and the Union Bank Bonds. The authorized agents of the holders of the bonds have published to the world that they will be satisfied with a levy of an annual tax of *one-fourth of one per cent.* on the value of the real and personal estate now subject to taxation in the State, until their debt is paid. On this plan, the man who owns one thousand dollars' worth of property would be taxed annually the trifling sum of two and a half dollars for the payment of these bonds; and the man who owns ten thousand dollars of property would be taxed twenty-five, annually; and he who owns one hundred thousand dollars would be taxed two hundred and fifty per year; and so on.

The following is the publication referred to:

JACKSON, MISS., *Sept.* 8, 1858.

GENTLEMEN:—

Your favor of yesterday is before us, and in reply, we would state, that as the attorneys of a majority of the holders of the Miss. Union and Planters' Bank Bonds, who, as we believe, also reflect the views of the other holders, we were instructed to bring suit against the State, on one of the bonds issued for and on account of the Mississippi Union Bank, for the purpose of testing, and having finally determined, the legal liability of the State for the payment of all of said bonds. Having brought said suit, in such manner as to accomplish this object, and having obtained the decree of the Chancellor, and of the High Court of Errors and Appeals, in favor of the holders, settling definitely all questions connected with the liability of the State, we, in common with the holders, consider the legal questions as finally determined, and neither they nor ourselves have ever expected to bring any other suit on said bonds, nor shall we do so. As to the Planters' Bank Bonds, neither the holders whom we represent, nor ourselves, recognize the existence of any legal question, or doubt as to the liability of the State, requiring the decisions of the Courts of Justice.

In reply to your second interrogatory, we would state, that at the time suit was instituted, it was the intention of the holders, in the event a decree should be obtained in their favor, to apply to the next succeeding Legislature, for an act making provision for the payment of the whole debt, in such mode and manner as the Legislature might see proper to provide. But owing to the fact that the cause was not finally decided until a period too late to have the question fully presented to the people of Mississippi, in order that they might give instructions to their Representatives free from partisan influence or bias, it is not their intention to apply at the next session of the Legislature for the passage of any law making unconditional provision for the payment of the whole debt, or for the payment of the particular decree rendered. As before stated, the suit was only to settle and fix the legal liability of the State, the object being to collect the whole debt, and not the particular bond.

In reply to your third interrogatory, we would state, that the holders of the bonds issued for and on account of the Mississippi Union and Planters' Bank, will consent to any reasonable time for the payment of these liabilities. They have not expected or anticipated any provision for the *immediate* payment of the whole debt. They have, on the contrary, authorized us to make a proposition to the Legislature of the State, which we see no impropriety in making public at this time, as it is the desire of the holders to obtain a full and free expression of public opinion.

The proposition they have to make is, that the bonds issued for and on account of the Mississippi Union and Planters' Bank, with the interest accrued thereon, shall be taken up, and new bonds issued, in their stead; that the new bonds so to be issued shall be made payable in four equal annual installments of fifteen, thirty, forty-five, and sixty years.

That the bonds so proposed to be issued for the interest *now due*, shall bear no interest for three years. The principal sum only to bear interest from date at the rates already fixed in the face of the bonds.—That after the expiration of three years, such portion of the bonds for interest as then remain due, shall bear interest at a like rate. And as to the amount of tax necessary to liquidate the debt, whilst they do not desire to dictate or interfere, yet they are perfectly willing to take a tax

of one-fourth of one per cent on the assessed ad-valorem value of such real and personal property as is now subject to taxation in the State of Mississippi; feeling confident that it will liquidate the debt before the expiration of the time proposed, or if it should not, being willing to grant any further *reasonable* extension of time.

As this proposition is now made for the first time, and as the holders wish to obtain a fair and unbiased expression of public opinion, and instructions by the people to the Legislature; could their wishes be consulted, they would desire that the next Legislature should provide by law in such manner as to free the question from extraneous or party influences, for a submission of this their proposal to the people—feeling assured, that now that all questions of law are settled, the people, without distinction of party, will accede to so reasonable a proposition; and give the necessary instructions to their representatives to have it accepted and passed in the form of a law.

From a desire to return a prompt answer to your queries, we have not had time to write this response with that clearness and precision that we could wish, but hoping that we will be understood,

We remain, very respectfully,

ADAMS & DIXON.

To Messrs. PATRICK HENRY,
GRAFTON BAKER,
A. R. JOHNSTON,
GEO. L. POTTER,
WM. R. MILES,
A. G. MAYERS.

This liberal proposition has not yet been accepted; nor is it known that any step has been taken towards executing the decree of the Supreme Court. But there is some reason to hope it may be done at the next meeting of the Legislature.

CHAPTER XXI.

Reminiscences of Mr. Prentiss, by Balie Peyton.

THIS seems to be a suitable place for introducing the following graphic reminiscences, furnished by Col. Balie Peyton, late United States Minister to Chili, and now a distinguished member of the San Francisco bar. Col. Peyton was one of Mr. Prentiss' old and most devoted friends ; nor should his name be mentioned in these pages without a grateful acknowledgment of the fact. In a letter written but a few months before his death, Mr. Prentiss alludes to it with much feeling. Referring to a certain matter, which had caused him no little trouble, he adds : "The result is much more due to Balie Peyton than to me. Peyton was very indignant at the manner in which I had been treated, and took the thing in hand with such warmth as forced it to a conclusion. I shall not soon forget his friendly action."

BALIE PEYTON TO THE EDITOR.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Santiago de Chili, *Sept.* 25, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR:—

* * * Owing to the unexpected departure of Lieut. Phelps, who leaves to-morrow, and has been kind enough to bear to you these sheets, I am prevented from re-arranging and condensing them, as was my intention. With all their imperfections on their head, therefore, I send them to you.

One amongst many incidents, which I would have referred to,

if more time had been allowed, or rather, if I had not been so much occupied in my official duties, on account of the severe illness of the Secretary of Legation—was the anxiety manifested by Mr. Prentiss, to volunteer for the Mexican war, at the call of Gen. Taylor. He consulted me on the subject, and I strongly advised against it, considering that his family, business, and other causes forbade the step, which I myself found sufficiently embarrassing, when I came to ship off my four motherless children on a steamer to Tennessee.

Wishing you all success in your laudable undertaking,

I remain, most truly, your friend,

Balie Peyton.

It was in the summer of 1835, at Louisville, Kentucky, that I first met S. S. Prentiss. In returning with my family from Washington, after the adjournment of Congress, of which I was a member, to my farm in Tennessee, I put up at the Galt House. Before long, our two eldest children, Emily and Balie, about the ages of five and three years, who after the confinement of a small steamer, were enjoying their freedom in the corridor, came running into the chamber, and exclaiming, "*Look! what a gentleman has given Balie!*" who had a handsome diamond breast-pin in his bosom. Their mother immediately sent them with direction to return the pin; but they came back, stating that the gentleman insisted on Balie's keeping it as a present. Shortly thereafter I received a card, with the compliments of Mr. Prentiss, who invited me to his room. I found him surrounded by a party of friends, to whom he introduced me, apologizing, at the same time, for what he was pleased to term the liberty he had taken, in a manner peculiarly bland and courteous. He then begged "that I would do him the very great favor to permit the child to retain the trifling present he had made him;" adding, "that the little fellow came to him with the utmost confidence when called, told him his name," &c., &c., and urged his request with so much earnestness that there was no resisting him. His was a face that a child would naturally trust at first sight. From

this accidental meeting, commenced an acquaintance which ripened into a friendship, the cordiality of which was not interrupted for one moment during his life. The first impression which he made on me, and, as I believe, on every one who approached him, was highly favorable, and not to be effaced. His stature was rather below than above the medium standard, but his chest, neck (which rivalled Byron's), and shoulders, were uncommonly full, erect, and well developed, betokening a fine constitution, and great strength in the arms. His features, taken together, were distinguished for manly beauty, and marked by an expression of unmistakable kindness and benevolence. The high, intellectual forehead, the mild penetration and poetical cast of the eye, and the inflexible resolution, indicated by the lines of the mouth, stamped him, to the most casual observer, as a man of original genius and commanding qualities.

I have often heard him repeat an anecdote, which shows how far he was from sensitiveness on account of his stature. In the journey from Louisville to Harrodsburg, where he went for the purpose of appearing in the case of the Wilkinsons, he was accompanied by several friends, and stopped for the night at a country tavern. The landlady, an energetic and free-spoken person, while dishing out the tea and coffee, went round the table, inquiring: "What will you have, *stranger*, tea or coffee?" "*Individual*, will you have tea or coffee?" And finally, coming to Mr. Prentiss, she said: "*Little short man*, what will you have?" which caused great merriment, no one enjoying it more than the little short man himself.

The first time I heard Mr. Prentiss speak in public, was at New Orleans, in the summer of 1839, as well as I remember the date, while he was on a visit to that city. In compliance with a public invitation, he consented to address the citizens, and with a view to the accommodation of the ladies, who expressed great desire to hear him, the St. Charles Theatre was procured for the occasion. The immense building was filled to overflowing with the beauty and fashion of the city, while hundreds were excluded for want of room. Being one of the committee who escorted him on the stage, my heart sunk at the responsibility

of his position; and while the walls shook with the plaudits of the dazzling assemblage, I wondered if it were possible for any man to come up to the extravagant expectations entertained of him by the public. But I was soon relieved of all anxiety on the point, and found myself carried away with the rest, as an atom of chaff borne along by the resistless tempest of his eloquence. He had no subject, no particular theme, no competitor, and yet for two hours he enchained and electrified his audience; not only maintaining his high reputation as an orator of the first order, but even surpassing the public expectation. No man could, at the time, have done justice to this extraordinary effort, and it is not for me, at this remote period, to attempt it. Such were the boldness of his flights, and the abundance and brilliancy of his metaphors, original and borrowed from the poets, of domestic manufacture and foreign growth, that no stenographer could have followed him; nothing short of electricity, or the Daguerrean art, applied to the report of speeches, hot from the mouth of the speaker (which I hope to see accomplished by some Yankee), could have caught and transmitted that meteoric shower of eloquence.

"A hero of romance in real life," Mr. PRENTISS was ever inspired by the presence of ladies, and he poured out in profusion before them the choicest gems of his exhaustless fancy. "The ladies! God bless them!" he would exclaim, "in the sincerity of my heart I thank them for their presence on this occasion. I wish I were able to say or conceive something worthy of them; most gladly would I bind up my brightest and best thoughts into bouquets, and throw them at their feet." He went on to speak of the heroic courage and devoted patriotism of the sex in every great struggle for Liberty. "The ladies of Poland stripped the jewels from their delicate fingers and snowy necks, and cast them into the famished treasury of their bleeding country. Our grandmothers, having no jewels, moulded their pewter spoons into bullets, and sent their sons, with Washington, to fight the battles of the Revolution." This is but a dim outline, the cold skeleton, of some of his concluding remarks, complimentary to the female portion of his audience.

Such was the effect produced by this wonderful speech, that all were desirous of again enjoying a similar treat, and it was determined to give him a public dinner, as a well-merited compliment, and also to afford many who were unable to procure admittance to the St. Charles, an opportunity of hearing him. In the course of a few days the affair came off, when he made one of the happiest dinner-table speeches I ever heard; all his exquisite imagery and classical figures being entirely new, repeating nothing which he had said on the previous occasion. As we entered the room, he inquired of me what was expected of him, saying that, as he had so recently spoken in the city, he feared it might be considered indelicate for him to inflict upon his friends another speech. I assured him he need have no fear on that score, as there were many present who had never heard him, and that we were all anxious to hear him again. "Well, then, I must try and give them a dish of fresh fish," which he really did, seasoned to suit the most fastidious appetite.

I have seen it represented that he had an impediment in his speech, which I consider a mistake. It is true, there was a slight lisp, perceptible at the commencement of a speech; but it was by no means disagreeable, and disappeared, or was forgotten, as he warmed in his subject. I never knew him to stammer, or hesitate, or to be at a loss for a word, or for *the* word. He possessed a greater flow of language, and was gifted with a greater variety of choice figures and classical quotations, than any man I ever heard speak. He would repeat the most intricate passages from Milton, Shakspeare, Scott, or Byron, with verbal accuracy and wonderful effect; while his boldest flights were always the most finished and happy. His temperament was essentially poetical; he felt, looked, thought, and spoke poetry; so that in his quotations, which seemed to come unbidden, there was so much homogeneousness, such a commingling of electric sparks from kindred elements, you could with difficulty distinguish what he borrowed from that which was his own; it was hard to separate the warp from the woof, there appearing to be no difference in the texture or figure, in the staple or stripe. I have heard him in one speech, utter enough of the raw material of

poetry to fill a volume; nor have I any doubt but that, had he early and steadfastly courted the Muses, he would have immortalized himself as a poet, and that it might have been said of him:

> "His was the hero's soul of fire,
> And his the bard's immortal name,
> And his was love, exalted high
> By all the glow of chivalry."

I have also seen him represented as a man of "fiery temperament," whose genius would best ripen under a Southern sun, &c., &c., which I look upon as an error, arising from a superficial view of his character. He was the very reverse of *fiery*, being naturally mild, amiable, gentle, and humane. I never knew any man who possessed so good a temper, and such uniformly cheerful spirits. His temperament, as I have said, was poetical, not fiery; his spirit chivalric, but not fierce or sanguinary---far, very far from it. His standard of virtue was high, and, when aroused, he would lash with a whip of scorpions all gross departures from the principles of honor and morality. But while he was unsparing of the offence, no man possessed a more forgiving or merciful heart towards the offender, when he had no longer the power to do mischief. He carried the same views with him into politics, being unwilling to admit that a man may act on any less elevated principles in public affairs than in private life. Hence he was sometimes considered as acting harshly and passionately, when influenced alone by principle, and what he deemed a call of duty.

His self-possession and disinterestedness are strikingly shown by an anecdote, which I have often heard, of his second duel with Gen. Foote; and it is so illustrative of the man, that all who knew him will agree that if the incident did not occur, it is in perfect keeping with his character. The meeting took place on the right bank of the Mississippi River, opposite Vicksburg, and at the first fire Mr. Prentiss' pistol snapped, while Gen. Foote missed, shooting over him. This increased the eagerness of the large crowd assembled to witness the affair, to such a degree that they pressed up on each side of the line,

until there was left quite a narrow space, scarcely room enough for the passage of the balls. After the parties had resumed their positions, pistol in hand and triggers set, awaiting the word for a second fire, everything being as still as death, Mr. PRENTISS observed a little boy, who, anxious to witness "*the fun*," was climbing a sapling in his rear, and said to him: "My son, you had better take care; Gen. Foote is shooting rather wild." The good humoured tone in which the remark was made, the solicitude it implied for the safety of the child, the coolness and forgetfulness of self in a situation so trying, elicited a round of applause, which made the forest ring.

His chivalric spirit adapted itself to the times and country in which his lot was cast, not as a matter of choice, but from necessity. Public opinion had established the wager of battle as the only mode of settling points of honor, which no man could decline, and maintain his position and usefulness in society. Mr. P. and Gen. Foote met and fought, as did Saladin and the Knight of the Leopard, by the Diamond of the Desert on the shores of the Dead Sea, without retaining the slightest feeling of personal malice. Foote supported PRENTISS in his election for Congress, and Mr. P. ever spoke in the highest terms of Gen. Foote.

Mr. PRENTISS gave me a most interesting account of his travels to the West and South, and of his arrival in Natchez. His facetious ridicule of the cheapness of things at Cincinnati was irresistibly amusing.

Encountering, one day, a stout boy, who was staggering under an immense basket of peaches, he put a few of them into his pockets, and gave the lad two bits (a quarter of a dollar). As he walked on, he observed the basket following after, but at first supposed it was accidental. At length, however, from the persevering manner in which the youngster kept at his heels, he accosted him, saying, "My boy, was it not of you I bought the peaches?" "Yes, sir." "And did I not pay you for them?" "Yes, sir; and I want to know where to carry them for you." All at once the truth flashed upon him, and he found himself the owner of a big basket of peaches; which, however, he prevailed on the boy to retain as his individual property.

He reached Natchez with but five dollars in his pocket; and having brought letters to a wealthy merchant of that place, he borrowed of him some fifteen dollars, to meet certain necessary expenditures, until he should earn the amount, in a situation which he had soon obtained with an estimable family in the vicinity. From motives of delicacy, he refrained from applying to his employers for money until the first quarter's salary was due, when he went to the city for the express purpose of repaying the loan, and returning his thanks for the favor. But when he presented himself at his counting-room, the old gentleman broke out in a harsh reprimand, and read him a severe lecture on the importance of punctuality in such cases, while he opened one record book after another, in which stood the name of S. S. PRENTISS, in capitals, with $15 charged against it, running the credit through all the books in which the charge was made. He left the house deeply mortified, and retiring to a secluded spot near by, he wept scalding and indignant tears. It was only a few years after this occurrence, when Mr. PRENTISS stood at the head of his profession, that the same man counted him down a fee of five thousand dollars, for services rendered in a case which involved the greater portion of his estate.

This incident, weighing on a proud and sensitive nature, might have had its influence in leading him to take a resolution which is the key to a career alien, in some respects, to his natural disposition. He found himself a penniless and friendless youth, in a distant land, with nothing but his clear head and stout heart, upon which to rely in the race of life opening before him; and where success was only attainable by the exercise of high and heroic qualities. He was to measure strength with men who esteemed personal courage, as exhibited in personal combat, a necessary, if not the first of virtues; without which honesty was insignificant, and talent became degraded. He found himself among a people who, from education and other causes, looked upon the "*Yankee*," as every New Englander was called in the South, as almost of necessity deficient in this chief excellence of man—personal courage as proven upon the body of some knight of the pistol in the duello. Mr. PRENTISS,

no doubt, felt this keenly as a disadvantage which was calculated to invite aggression; not only so, but he was of small stature, and so lame that, even with the help of a sustaining cane, he halted very much in his gait. All things considered, it is not to be wondered at that a man of his temperament, of his proud spirit and lofty aspirations, should have resolved to accommodate himself to the spirit of the times; for as to remodeling society, and changing the tone of public sentiment on this subject, it would have been a vain attempt for any one—much more for him. So that, from the necessity of the case, he adopted the Mississippi code as it then existed, and upheld it in a manner to impress himself upon the people no less as a hero than as an orator.

And yet, such was the frankness and generosty of his nature, and such the equanimity of his temper, that he met in personal combat only one gentleman, Gen. Foote, in a country where duels were "as plenty as blackberries." I say that such *was* the state of things in Mississippi; but I am happy to be able to state that there has been a very great revolution and change for the better in that chief source and only remedy of this savage custom—public opinion. It is now comparatively rare to hear of a duel there. In fact, the same may be said of all the Southern and Southwestern States.

While on this subject, I will relate an anecdote, which I received from his own mouth, going to show, that having once adopted the Southern code, he maintained it like a true knight, without respect to persons, suffering no man under any circumstances to trample on him.

While a bachelor at Vicksburg, he invited a select company of friends to spend the evening with him at his office. In the course of the evening they were intruded upon by a man not invited, and who was somewhat intoxicated. Mr. Prentiss received him with the utmost courtesy, begged that he would call at another time when he would be glad to see him, and endeavored, without success, to get rid of him by gentle means. But at length, the man becoming abusive and violent, he was constrained to eject him from his house. At a late hour of the

night, after the company dispersed, this person, who had been watching the opportunity, entered the office still more enraged and intoxicated, breathing vengeance and demanding satisfaction. Mr. PRENTISS, who never lost his temper or composure, tried to reason the case with him; but this only made him worse, as he appeared to consider it an additional insult, that he should not be recognized on account of being a mechanic. Mr. P. assured him, that he had no idea of objecting to him on that ground, and promised that if he would go home, sleep on the matter, and was of the same mind the next day, when cool, he would give him satisfaction. No, nothing would do; he was resolved to have satisfaction on the spot before he slept. Finding that no other course was left him, Mr. PRENTISS called up his servant boy Burr, a lad of about fifteen, snoring away in the corner, and directed him to bring his pistols, which he loaded with great care in the presence of this pertinacious bully, and gave him choice. They agreed to fire at the distance of eight paces on the corridor in the rear of the office, Burr giving the word, by counting one, two, three, four, five; the firing to take place between the words one, and five. Col. Burr (as he was called), having been sufficiently drilled as to his duties, was stationed inside of the door, holding a candle so that the light fell full on both. The parties took their positions, pistol in hand; Burr was at his post, and about to pronounce the fatal "one," when this rude man throwing down his pistol, exclaimed: "PRENTISS, do you think I am such a d——d fool as to fight you here at this time of night?" It was then about three in the morning. The incident affords evidence, at least, of what Napoleon termed "three o'clock in the morning courage," and that there was nothing aristocratical in Mr. PRENTISS' construction of the code of honor.

He was the subject of much obloquy, and newspaper abuse, in consequence of advocating the claims of the Choctaw Indians, which grew out of the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.* The thing finally arrived at such a pitch that he felt bound to notice

* Concluded on the 28th of September, 1830.

and put a stop to it. On landing at Vicksburg, in November of 1843, *en route* from Tennessee to New Orleans, I found Mr. Prentiss and Col. Forrester, an old friend and former colleague in Congress from Tennessee, looking out for me. They made so strong an appeal, that I was induced to leave the steamer, and accompany them to Hillsboro, the county seat of Scott County, situated in the interior of Mississippi, where the Board of Commissioners appointed by the President to adjudicate these claims, was about to meet.

A few days before my arrival, a most violent and calumnious article appeared in a newspaper published at Vicksburg, in which the Choctaw claims, then about to be submitted to the Board, were denounced as fraudulent, and Col. Forrester and Mr. Prentiss held up in a most odious light before the public.* The name of the author was demanded, and, after some hesitation, rather than meet the consequences of a refusal, the editor agreed to place in the hands of Mr. Prentiss a sealed package, containing full and undeniable evidence of the authorship, to be opened at Hillsboro, on condition that Mr. ——, one of the commissioners, should deny himself to be the author of the article.

This expedition, partaking somewhat of both a civil and military character, afforded the best opportunity I ever had for appreciating the personal qualities, and splendid abilities of Mr. Prentiss. Our journey led through Jackson, the capital of the State, where I heard him publicly denounce Repudiation as a *crime*, as an act of *moral turpitude*, when surrounded by repudiators, who had all "been out," and many of whom had shot their man with perfect impunity; but those who did not like him too well, dreaded him too much to make it a personal matter.

An early stage of our journey brought us to the town of Brandon, rendered famous by the immense quantity of irredeemable paper money issued by a bank located at that place, and also by the tragical end of its President, who threw himself into Pearl River from the roadside on which we travelled. Here we

*See *Vicksburg Sentinel*, November 10, 1843.—Ed.

had the curiosity to visit the jail, for the purpose of seeing the aperture through which, it was rumored, a dead man had made his escape, and which remained unclosed. The truth of the story was, that there existed some excitement, and no little competition, amongst the faculty for the body of a man who was hanged; it had been placed temporarily in jail, for safe keeping, and while one party were regaling the jailor, with a view to induce him to favor their pretensions, the other made a breach in the wall, and bore off the prize.

After travelling several days over roads almost impassable, through a country sparsely settled, chiefly by squatters, we arrived at Hillsboro. It was a small village, with the forest-trees standing on the public square, and in most of the streets. Here and there lay a fallen trunk, cut down for firewood; the limbs being lopped off as occasion required. The Court House, Jail, and private dwellings were built of trees, the former, and some of the latter, having two sides hewn. At this rude place were collected an immense number of Choctaw Indians and land-speculators.

The object of Mr. P.'s visit was to expose the Commissioner, who had publicly denounced the claims he was about to adjudicate, drive him from the Board, or induce the other Commissioners to refuse to sit with him, on the ground that he had disqualified himself, both as a judge and as a gentleman, to be associated with them in the decision of causes which he had prejudged; and also to demand personal satisfaction for the abusive article.

This journey to Hillsboro, as I have said; the nature of the business which called him there; the crowd of men, savage, semi-savage, civilized, and semi-civilized, amongst whom he was thrown, and to all of whom he was the chief object of attraction; the philippics he hurled in the face of that Commissioner, presented S. S. Prentiss in a greater variety of scenes, and in a more interesting point of view than I ever saw him, or any other man.

We arrived a day or two before the Board was convened for the transaction of business, and put up with an unlettered but

well-meaning old gentleman, who filled a variety of public offices; being the town "squire," jailor, and tavern-keeper; in which last vocation he had many competitors. He gave us the particulars of the trial and execution, at that place, a short time before, of two men who were charged with, and doubtless guilty of, atrociously murdering a man on the highway for his money. They broke jail once or twice, and went to Texas: but had been brought back and recommitted to prison, where they were guarded by volunteer companies of citizens, who stood sentinel around the jail day and night until the Court convened. The accused, however, contrived to have their causes continued until the next term, with a view, as it was believed, to tire out the people, and again make their escape. Whereupon, after the adjournment of Court, a call was issued for the assembling of all the voters of the county at Hillsboro. On the first trial before this popular jury, a majority of fifteen were against hanging, but the "Squire" said it was believed that illegal votes had been cast by non-residents of the county; another meeting was, therefore, called, at which the two men were condemned by a considerable majority, and accordingly hanged.

When not otherwise employed, we amused ourselves in shooting squirrels, which proved to be no small accession to our limited bill-of-fare. A broiled grey squirrel is quite a delicacy when properly cooked, and this Mr. Prentiss superintended in person, calling loudly for butter with which to dress them.

He was formally introduced to the chief, "Captain Post Oak," a perfect model of the natural man, six feet six or eight inches in height; he joined, too, in the sports of the Indians—among other things, shooting blow-guns, at which he soon became so expert that he beat the best of them. A blow-gun is formed of a reed, or cane, from twelve to fifteen feet in length, bored through, so as to admit the passage of a light arrow, which is ejected by the breath; hence the name. With this weapon the Indians are able to bring down birds and squirrels from the trees.

In passing the jail one day we caught the glimpse of a prisoner confined in the dungeon, or lower story. He beckoned us to the grates, and then, through his livid lips and chattering teeth,

for it was frosty November weather, poured forth a touching appeal for protection; strongly protesting his innocence, and declaring his ignorance of the charge against him. Additional interest was imparted to the situation of this man, on account of the fate of the two who had been so recently elected to the gallows by a public meeting of the sovereigns. Repairing forthwith to the tavern, we inquired of our landlord as to the charge against him, and requested, as his counsel, to see the *mittimus* upon which he was committed. The "Squire" appeared to be somewhat embarrassed, and at length acknowledged that there had been no regular commitment, nor even any specific charge against him; but said the fellow was a doubtful character, and had been imprisoned on suspicion. "On suspicion of what?" asked Mr. PRENTISS. "Has anybody been kil'ed, or robbed, or lost a horse, a hog, or a cow?" "No, no," said the Squire, "nothing of that sort has happened, but then he is a kind of *surplus* character, circulating about, and not very agre'ble at that."

Mr. PRENTISS declared that he should be set free; and that if the Squire refused to turn him out, he should be discharged on *habeas corpus*, if he had to go to Jackson himself for the writ, and sue every man concerned in his detention for false imprisonment. This startled the Squire, who had never seen nor had he any definite idea of a writ of *habeas corpus*; and entertaining a respect mingled with awe for Mr. PRENTISS, he consented to discharge the prisoner. Unfortunately, however, his son, who had that morning ridden twelve miles into the country in quest of butter wherewith to dress our squirrels, had carried the key of the jail with him; so that it could not be opened until he came back. Meanwhile Mr. PRENTISS, whose whole heart was now in the matter, and who felt like an ancient knight bent upon the rescue of an unfortunate captive from some feudal castle, returned to console the prisoner with the prospect of his early liberation. He, poor fellow, stood shivering with sunken eyes and hollowed cheeks, looking the picture of despair. Mr. PRENTISS inquired if he did not think a little brandy would help him! "*Mightily!* but there is no chance to get it in to me." Mr. P., however, set

his fertile ingenuity to work, and succeeded, by introducing a blow-gun through the grates, one end of which the prisoner put to his mouth, while the brandy was poured into the other.

Finally, the young man having returned with the key, he was brought to the tavern, ate a hearty meal, received a handsome purse, sufficient to supply his immediate wants, and went on his way rejoicing; looking upon his liberation as next to a miracle, and the generous man who accomplished it as his good angel.

There was to me something inexpressibly interesting in this scene, as the poor fellow gazed in the face of his deliverer, and hung around him, as though he felt secure in his newly regained freedom only in the presence of Mr. Prentiss. It called to mind the touching picture of Uncle Toby at the bedside of Lefevre, and the effect produced by his honest, benevolent face in winning the heart of the little son of the dying officer, who was unconsciously drawn to his side, and took hold of his hand. All that Sterne said of his hero, and more, might, without exaggeration, be said of Mr. Prentiss. "There was a frankness in him which let you at once into his soul and showed you the goodness of his nature. There was something in his look, and voice, and manner, which internally beckoned to the unfortunate, inviting them to come and take shelter under him." He was, indeed, a man whom, at first sight, the lowest would trust, the distressed appeal to, and the brave confide in.

But to return to our business at Hillsboro'. When the Board met, in a log cabin, the scene was picturesque in the extreme. There were the three Commissioners—Mr. Graves, Mr. Tyler (a brother of the President of the United States), and Mr. ——, with their clerk, seated on one side of a table made of pine-boards; on the other sat the counsel of the Indians, while the building was filled to overflowing with their clients, hundreds of whom, unable to find room inside, were crowded around the house, with their swarthy faces and dark eyes, peering through the apertures between the logs.

Mr. Prentiss rose to a preliminary question; and handing a newspaper, containing the offensive article, to Mr. ——, inquired

whether he was or was not its author; to which he replied, with some hesitation and evident embarrassment, in the negative. Whereupon Mr. PRENTISS drew from his pocket and broke the seal of an envelope, containing the papers which had been placed in his hands by the editor of the *Vicksburg Sentinel*. They proved to be the original manuscript from which the article was published, in the handwriting of Mr. ——, and also his letter to the editor, which accompanied the same. In this letter he boldly assumed whatever responsibility might attach to him as author of the article, and in advance tendered personal satisfaction to the party aggrieved.* As these documents were produced, and the truth flashed upon him, the Commissioner made a lame effort to qualify his denial by saying, "I was the writer, but not the author, of the article, having copied it for a friend."

Mr. PRENTISS proceeded to read the letter and manuscript article, in the latter of which "one Forrester," and certain "influential men" acting with him, were denounced in unmeasured terms, the claims they advocated condemned as "the most stupendous fraud ever devised," and the whole thing represented as a deeply-laid plot to swindle the United States and the good people of Mississippi. The Commissioner was eulogized as if he were the only man in the Commission who possessed the talents, honesty, independence, and patriotism to throw himself in the breach, and resist the peculators.†

After reading these documents, which he did with marked

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* "If Mr. Forrester calls, inform him that I will shoulder the responsibility, and hold myself personally responsible to him."

† The following is an extract from the article: "We say to —— [the Commissioner], your position is the very one that a bold, resolute, and ambitious man would wish to occupy. You stand alone. * * * It is believed you are the only obstacle to the consummation of this tremendous fraud. You have baffled them [the speculators] heretofore; by your acknowledged resources and energies, unequal as is the struggle of one against a host, you may defeat them. Be the result what it may, your position is a proud one. The community all see that a league of men, banded for plunder, are striking at *one* man. Be firm. If you shrink, you fall with dishonor. If you sustain your ground, as we believe you will, you cover yourself with honor. We look to the issue with great interest. Your friends will stake their lives upon your firmness."

deliberation and emphasis, Mr. PRENTISS commenced the most extraordinary effort of vindictive eloquence I ever heard, and, I doubt not, one of the most remarkable ever uttered by any man.

When, having finished the reading, he threw down the papers and stood drawn up to his full height, his noble front erect, capacious chest distended, as though it were too narrow to contain the spirit which stirred within him, his face beaming, coruscating, his flashing eye fixed upon the unfortunate Commissioner, it seemed to me that he was a grand subject for a painter, or sculptor, worthy of the task.

Before he uttered one word, his work was accomplished; the man was gone, the judge was the convicted culprit. Indeed, during the two hours in which he poured out that torrent of eloquence, I do not believe the effect produced at any moment, exceeded that which was imparted by his face before he opened his mouth to speak. I never before comprehended the force of an expression, used by some writer, D'Israeli, I believe, in describing Voltaire, that he possessed in a remarkable degree, "physiognomical eloquence." But to the speech and its effects! If the philippic of Cicero, which drove Cataline from Rome, was more terrible, which I doubt, it is not to be wondered at that the traitor left the city.

On this occasion Mr. PRENTISS, with an oppressed nation as his clients, had a noble theme for oratory, scarcely inferior in interest and variety to that of Sheridan in the trial of Hastings:

> "When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
> Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
> His was the thunder, his the avenging rod,
> The wrath—the delegated voice of God!
> Which shook the nations through his lips—and blazed
> Till vanquish'd Senates trembled as they praised."

He gave a most interesting history of the Choctaws as a nation, of their pacific character, and uniform friendship for the people of the United States; dwelling with great effect upon the oppression and injustice which they had already experienced. He described what a judge should be, investing him with almost

divine attributes of virtue and wisdom and justice; and then contrasted such a pure and elevated character with the prejudiced partisan and unprincipled demagogue who, acting in the name, and clothed with the power of his Government, was about to crush the last hope of an injured people, and filch from them the mite which that Government, in the exercise of its resistless power, had seen fit to grant them. In alluding to the wrongs which the Choctaws had experienced in return for their good conduct, he melted the hearts of all—Indians and white men—and drew tears from eyes before which death had no terrors; groans and sobs burst from stoic bosoms, and cheeks were wet which had seldom or never been profaned by a tear.

The Board adjourned to consider the motion to expel Mr. ——, and at its next sitting he read a protest against the power of his colleagues to deprive him of a commission he received from the President of the United States; which was the occasion of such another speech from Mr. PRENTISS as I have just described. But the other Commissioners refused to sit with him, referred the question to Washington for the decision of the President, and adjourned *sine die*.

The personal satisfaction, which had been tendered in advance by Mr. ——, was refused; and having thus retreated beyond the pale of honor, he was dropped. The President afterwards removed him.

I was particularly struck with Mr. PRENTISS' cheerfulness and elasticity of spirits, which never flagged for an instant during the whole time.

Of his readiness at an *impromptu* speech, in which he surpassed all men of my acquaintance, and I am inclined to believe never had a superior, I will give an instance, related to me by a person who was present on the occasion. In the autumn of 1841, I think it was, he joined a hunting party, with which he spent a week or two under a tent in the forests of the Sun Flower, a small river tributary to the Mississippi, in the vicinity of Vicksburg. Towering above the tent stood one of those remarkable elevations, evidently the work of art, which abound in the Mississippi valley, and are commonly called Indian

mounds; although the Indians have no tradition of their origin, and are as ignorant of the race by whom they were constructed, as the geologist or antiquary.

One day Mr. Prentiss, with the aid of the vines and overhanging boughs, made his way to the top of the mound, where his friends, who were collected around the tent, discovering him, united in the call for a speech—a speech from Prentiss! "Upon what subject?" "Upon the subject on which you now stand." He at once set off in a playful sally for the amusement of himself and friends, but warming in the subject as he proceeded, his creative imagination soon peopled the forest with that lost tribe, that mysterious race, who, ages past, inhabited the country before the birth of the aboriginal trees that stand upon these huge piles, and bespeak their previous existence. He introduced every variety of character, kings, princes, courtiers, warriors; marshalled armies and fought battles, going on thus for more than an hour, in a vein of philosopical reflection and poetical invention, which imparted a thrilling, almost a real interest to the imaginary scene. The gentleman from whom I had this incident was a man of cultivated taste, had often heard Mr. Prentiss at the bar, and on the hustings, and considered this as one of his happiest efforts. How completely he came up to Shakspeare's description of the poet, as he stood improvising from that Indian mound in the wilds of the Sun Flower!

> "The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

In almost every county of Mississippi, there linger some such traditional recollections of his wonderful powers as an orator. He possessed the rare faculty of impressing his elevated views and noble sentiments upon the hearts of all classes of men, of striking out the latent spark which abides in the uncultivated mind, of making such men cry out: "That's just what I've always thought!" He never flattered the people, or attempted

to stir up one class of the community against another: but strove rather to excite a spirit of pride and emulation, which was calculated to elevate the masses to the condition of the more fortunate, by fair and honorable competition.

Mr. PRENTISS was a profound lawyer. It was, indeed, difficult to determine whether he was more able in an argument before the Supreme Court, or captivating in an address before a popular assembly. In his management of causes, and intercourse with members of the bar and bench, he was a model of fairness and gentlemanly manners. His conversational powers were equal to his eloquence in debate; he possessed in an extraordinary degree, the wit, humor, and flowing courtesy so fascinating in social intercourse. Of all the men I ever met, he was best entitled to the compliment which Byron paid to Sheridan:

> From the charm'd council to the festive board,
> Of human feelings the unbounded lord.
> * * * *
> And here, oh! here, where, yet all young and warm
> The gay creations of his spirit charm.
> The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit,
> Which knew not what it was to intermit.

But in his case, the "high spirit" never "forgot to soar." On the contrary, no man ever left a purer fame, or a name more unsullied, than did S. S. PRENTISS, in all that constitutes high honor and spotless integrity of character: for, although for many years he was surrounded by the severest trials and temptations to which, in the ordinary course of things, human virtue can be subjected, his principles remained as pure, and his heart continued as warm and fresh, as the instant he bid farewell to his mother, and took leave of the parental roof.

It is not surprising that he was a great popular favorite, for he was an extraordinary man in every sense; in his genius, his acquirements, his eloquence, his courage, which belonged to the age of chivalry, his unaffected goodness of heart, and integrity of character; but he was even more *beloved* than *admired* by his intimate acquaintance. The frankness, warmth, and cordiality

of his manners, his patient forbearance and sweetness of temper, united with boundless generosity, combined to make him the most agreeable and reliable of friends, and the best of husbands and fathers.

CHAPTER XXII.

Recollection of him in 1843-4—Speeches at a Whig Convention at New Orleans—Visits the North—Political Addresses during his Journey—The Presidential Election of 1844—Subject-matter of Mr. Prentiss' Addresses—Return South, and Speech at New Orleans on the Fine Arts—Letters—Invitations to attend Whig Conventions and Barbacues in other States—Visit to Nashville—Letter from Ex-Governor Jones—Speeches at Natchez, Jackson, and Vicksburg—Disappointment at the Result of the Election.

ÆT. 35. 1844.

THERE was, in some respects, a striking contrast between Mr. Prentiss in 1837 and in 1843–4. Marriage had wrought a most salutary change in his manner of life, as well as in his feelings. However it might before have been, industry and hard work were now his daily habit. He was, in every sense, a man of business, rarely allowing himself even a day's recreation. He rose early; and on coming down to breakfast, I almost invariably found him at his desk, engaged in reading, study, or correspondence. In the bosom of his family, he was one of the happiest of men. Nothing could exceed the sweetness of his temper, his affectionate devotion to his wife and child, or the bounteous warmth of his hospitality. He kept open house, and it were hard to say which was greatest, his delight in the visits of his friends, or their admiration for the beauty of his domestic life. His home was, indeed, just what might have been anticipated from the preceding letters to his mother and sisters.

Here is an extract from his New Year's letter to his mother :

BELMONT, *Dec.* 31, 1843.

MY DEAR MOTHER :—

I am compelled to leave home to-day, to be absent for one or two weeks on business ; but I cannot go away without first telling you how much we all love you, and how much we think of you. To-day is the last of the year, and to-morrow morning, if we could only be at Portland, you would receive a kiss and a Happy New Year from me, and from Mary, George, and dear little Jeanie. As we cannot give the kisses, we can at least send you the wishes ; and a *happy, happy* New Year do we all wish you, my dearest mother, and none more fervently than I. How much I would give to be with you, to talk over the changes which have happened and are to happen in the family. And so dear A. is married, and settled down as a clergyman's wife! It seems so strange, when we expected her to spend the winter here. But much as we regret the loss of her society, both Mary and I are delighted at the match. I doubt not she will be happy herself, and as *the Lady of the Parish*, cause much happiness to those around her. You must miss her very much ; still it is a comfort to have her so near. We have had our friends up from Natchez, spending Christmas with us. They went home day before yesterday. Her grandmamma, Mrs. Williams, thinks there is no such child living as Jeanie. We all think she is going to look more like you than any one else. Mary sees a strong resemblance to your portrait, and G. and I recognize your features in her continually. She is a sweet, dear, good little girl, and you would be proud of her, if you could see her. Edward P—— is here on a visit. We are all much pleased with him. Give my love to Aunt D., Uncle James, and Capt. D.'s family.

On the 22d of February, 1844, the anniversary of Washington's birthday, a grand Whig Mass Convention was holden at New Orleans. Great preparations had been

made for the day, and a large number of distinguished citizens had been invited from neighboring States. The presence in New Orleans of Mr. Clay, the Whig candidate for the Presidency, added much to the general interest of the occasion. The immense concourse, after marching through the city with gorgeous banners, and at the sound of stirring music, assembled on the *Place d'Armes*, where the scene was imposing in the extreme. It was said to be the largest popular assemblage that had ever met in Louisiana. The opening address was made by Mr. Prentiss. His trip to New Orleans, and the speech itself, are thus referred to by Mr. Thorpe in his *Reminiscences:*

Prentiss had originally a constitution of iron; his frame was so perfect in its organization, that, in spite of the most extraordinary negligence of health, his muscles had all the compactness, glossiness, and distinctiveness of one who had been specially trained by diet and exercise. It was this constitution that enabled him to accomplish so much in so short a time. He could almost wholly discard sleep for weeks, with apparent impunity; he could eat or starve; do anything that would kill ordinary men, yet never feel a twinge of pain. I saw him once amidst a tremendous political excitement; he had been talking, arguing, dining, visiting, and travelling, without rest, for three whole days. His companions would steal away at times to sleep, but Prentiss was like an ever-busy spirit, here, and there, and everywhere. The morning of the fourth day came, and he was to appear before an audience familiar with his fame, and critical in the last degree. He desired to succeed, for more was depending than he had ever before had cause to stake upon such an occasion. Many felt a fear that he would be unprepared. I mingled in the expecting crowd; I saw ladies who had never honored the stump with their presence struggling for seats; counsellors, statesmen, and professional men, the *élite* of a great city, were gathered together. An hour before I had seen Prentiss, still apparently ignorant of his engagement.

The time of trial came; and the remarkable man presented himself, the very picture of buoyant health, of unbroken rest. All this had been done *by the unyielding resolve of his will.* His triumph was complete; high wrought expectations were more than realized, prejudice was demolished, professional jealousy silenced, and he descended from the rostrum, freely accorded his proper place among the orators and statesmen of the land.

This speech excited such admiration that he found it impossible to leave the city without again addressing the people. His second speech was delivered in the Arcade, and was even more applauded than the first. The audience contained a large number of ladies, whose enthusiasm was roused to the highest pitch by the gay and beautiful compliments he showered upon them. The French, or Creole, portion of his auditors were especially captivated by his style of speaking.

On the 23d, the Convention reassembled on the *Place d'Armes,* and, forming a procession, marched to the St. Charles, to pay their respects to Mr. Clay, who was on the point of setting out on his journey North. Towards noon it reached that once magnificent structure. Here occurred a characteristic incident, which is thus related by Mr. Thorpe:

> The streets presented a vast ocean of heads, and every building commanding a view was literally covered with human beings. The great Statesman of the West presented himself to the multitude between the tall columns of the finest portico in the world. The scene was beyond description, and of vast interest. As the crowd swayed too and fro, a universal shout was raised for Mr. Clay to speak; he uttered a sentence or two, waved his hand in adieu, and escaped amidst the prevailing confusion. PRENTISS, meanwhile, evidently unconscious of being himself noticed, was at a side window, gazing upon what was passing with all the delight of the humblest spectator. Suddenly, his name was announced. He attempted to withdraw from public

gaze, his friends pushed him forward. Again his name was shouted, hats and caps were thrown in the air, and he was finally compelled to show himself on the portico. With remarkable delicacy, he chose a less prominent place than that previously occupied by Mr. Clay, although perfectly visible. He thanked his friends for their kindness by repeated bows, and by such smiles as he alone could give. "A speech! a speech!" thundered a thousand voices. He lifted his hand; in an instant everything was still—then pointing to the group that surrounded Mr. Clay, he said, "Fellow citizens, when the eagle is soaring in the sky, the owls and the bats retire to their holes." And long before the shout that followed this remark had ceased, PRENTISS had disappeared amid the multitude.*

Soon after his return from New Orleans, professional business called him to Washington City. The following is a specimen of his letters to his wife during the journey:

MONTGOMERY, (Ala.) *March* 16, 1844.
10 o'clock at night.

MY DEAREST WIFE:—

I left New Orleans on Wednesday last, about midday, arrived at Mobile on Thursday morning, and in the evening took a boat to this place. I was waited on in Mobile before I had been there five minutes, with an invitation to make a speech. I declined, however, as I did not feel very well—but dined with the Mayor of the city at his invitation. I arrived here this evening at four o'clock—when I was forthwith called upon by another committee to make them a speech. I begged off, and was about going up to my room to write you a letter, and then take a little sleep, as the cars leave here at one to-night.

* "I was with Mr. PRENTISS in New Orleans, in 1844, at the time of Mr. Clay's visit, and when on being called for to address the crowd after the old Whig chieftain had spoken, he was dragged forward by friends, and made the apt and unanswerable reply mentioned by Mr. Thorpe in the *American Review*. The language is that exactly, almost verbatim, which Mr. PRENTISS used on that memorable occasion. I never saw him before when he was really embarrassed, but then his voice actually trembled from confusion, and his cheek and lips blenched with pallor. He afterwards expressed to me somewhat of indignation that any crowd would call on another after Henry Clay had just stirred them with one of his sweeping harangues, short as his speech had been that day."—*Letter from Col. Jos. B. Cobb.*

The committee just then returned, and informed me that a large crowd had assembled, among whom were many ladies, in expectation of hearing me, and that I must not disappoint them. With my usual good nature, I consented to their wishes, and have just returned from making a long speech to five hundred people. They appeared much gratified, but I am tired to death of it, and trust I shall be able to escape such annoyances in future. Since our marriage, my own dear Mary, I have abandoned all political ambition, and nothing but a sense of duty could induce me to take any part in politics. All my hopes and wishes are centered in home, and the dear friends who are connected with it. Oh! how homesick I do feel. I would let one of my fingers be cut off for the pleasure of seeing you and Jeanie, though only for five minutes. I think I never knew how much I loved you, till this long separation. I am sick and melancholy to think of the period which must intervene before my return. But there is one comfort, at least, in thinking how joyful will be that return. With what a throbbing and happy heart I shall clasp you and dear little Jeanie, once more, to my breast. How often I shall kiss you, and thank Heaven for the blessing it has afforded, in permitting me to do so. *Dear, dear Mary—sweet, sweet, Jeanie*—wife and daughter—your husband and father, though far away, is now thinking of you—and invoking, with tears in his eyes, all good angels to guard and protect you.

I go from here about forty miles on railroad—then take stage one hundred and fifty miles—then railroad to Charleston. I have, fortunately, a travelling companion, Col. R., of Jackson; he dined with us when Mr. Clay was at Vicksburg. This will make it more pleasant than if alone.

But it is now 10½ o'clock, and I shall be awakened at 12½, so I must lie down and take a little rest; it is all I will get to-night. I trust our dear mother is with you, and also Miss Eliza; to both of whom present my kind remembrances. To you and Jeanie, what can I say? Only that I love you—love you better than all the world besides. Good night, love, good night.

Ever your affectionate and devoted husband,

S. S. Prentiss.

From Washington he proceeded to New York, from whence he wrote :

I arrived here yesterday, and find I cannot resist my inclination to pay a flying visit to Portland, though it will take time, which I can but ill spare. I shall leave for Boston on Tuesday evening, April 2d, and remain there one day, on business. Thursday morning, I shall go down to Newburyport, dine with Anna, and bring her to Portland with me on the same evening. Yesterday I got a letter from Mary, informing me of the well-being of herself and dear little Jeanie. I will not write more, as I shall so soon be able to talk with you. My heart already beats with pleasure at the thought of seeing you all so soon. God bless you all.

On reaching Boston, he was immediately waited upon by a committee of one of the Clay Clubs, with the request that he would address the Whigs of the city in the evening. Before the hour of meeting, the large hall of the Odeon was filled to overflowing—floor, boxes, and orchestra—by an audience composed, in great measure, of the intellectual *élite* of Boston and Cambridge. He began by remarking, sportively, that he "was not willing to say he had 'fallen among thieves,' but he was quite sure he had come in contact with highwaymen ; for, as he was passing quietly through the city, on his private business, they had intercepted him, and compelled him to *stand and deliver*."

The following extract from a letter of the corresponding secretary, enclosing the thanks of the Clay Club for his address, will indicate its spirit :

In conveying to you the sentiments of our Club, I beg to assure you that I do not feel I am discharging a mere formal duty. To any one, indeed, who had addressed us upon such an occasion, we should have presented our thanks; but you, sir,

have known how to break through and penetrate the cold exterior, which, as you so happily observe, conceals Northern hearts, that yet beat as warmly and responsively to the calls of patriotism as those in the sunnier climes of the South. We feel that our thanks and gratitude are more especially due to you, because, in a time marked by far too much of popular sycophancy, you have boldly dared, as a public man, to expose and lay bare the moral gangrene that is fast eating into the vitals of our glorious Republic. In doing this, you have ventured to beard that "shadowy monster" so often and so unjustly invoked by our political opponents, as the "Voice of the People"—showing what daring encroachments upon the Constitution, and dearest rights of the People, have been perpetrated through the agency of this bugbear. You have done more; you have demonstrated, that *only through the acknowledged forms of the Constitution* can the will, or voice of the people, have any valid effect; and that no number of citizens, however large, can rightfully alter, or abrogate, any part of our State or National Constitutions, or the laws made under them, save through the forms and modes prescribed in the same. Such noble and manly sentiments as these demand our admiration, and we cannot but feel that, with your powerful advocacy, we have a new guarantee for the preservation of social order, of law, and well-regulated liberty.

While stopping for a few hours in Newburyport, although it was the annual Fast-day, he was waited upon by a committee, with an urgent invitation to address his Whig brethren there. He reached Portland late in the evening, and early the next morning was called away from the table by a committee, charged with a similar request. He tried hard to beg off, pleading the shortness of his visit home, and utter exhaustion from his long journey. But it was all in vain. On returning to the breakfast-room, he remarked, playfully, but with a care-worn look: "They seem to think it as easy for me to make speeches as it is for a juggler to pull ribands out of his mouth."

The Portland audience, like that at Boston, was remarkable for its intelligence and weight of character. His address, though not wanting in fine rhetorical passages, was chiefly distinguished for its high moral tone, the elaborate skill with which it exposed certain popular fallacies respecting Liberty, and its hearty denunciation of demagogues, both Whig and Democratic. It was thus noticed at the time, by the accomplished scholar who then edited the *Portland Advertiser* :*

The citizens of his native town gave Mr. PRENTISS, last evening, a most hearty and enthusiastic welcome.

The large hall of the Exchange was filled at an early hour, by a crowded audience, assembled on the invitation of the Clay Club to hear this gifted orator. The recollection of his admirable addresses among us in 1837 and 1840, united with the patriotic impulses of the present eventful year, raised the anticipation of a rich and animated entertainment. Nor was there any disappointment, as the spontaneous and unanimous applause of the audience testified again and again.

In fact, all expectations were more than fulfilled; for in addition to a most brilliant eloquence and fervid appeals to the passions of his auditory, Mr. PRENTISS enchained the understanding of all his hearers, by his profound investigation of the first principles of government, and by the rapid and severe logic of his argument upon the tendencies of the clashing political doctrines of the day. It has never been our fortune to hear, in a popular speech, a more convincing exhibition of truth, well reasoned out, and more happily presented with the best attractions of eloquence.

Mr. PRENTISS took a large and most accurate view of the opposing political parties of the present time, designating them as the *destructive* and the *conservative*. He did not rest his argument, however, in any manner, upon the application of names and epithets, but carefully traced the results and tendencies of the principle, or assumption of principle, which the destructive party has advocated and still professes. Beyond the expectation,

* Phineas Barnes, Esq.

certainly, of some, who had not known the extraordinary versatility of Mr. PRENTISS' powers, and the accuracy of his reflection and his logic, he proved himself to be, not only a most impassioned orator, but a profound political philosopher.

We have little time to say anything further, but we cannot refrain from referring to the admirable matter and manner of the closing parts of Mr. PRENTISS' address. His finely-wrought eulogy of Mr. Clay, the vivid description of the existing political contest, and of the triumphs that are to be won by the Whigs, and the handsome and patriotic appeal to the ladies who were present, excited an irrepressible enthusiasm and delight.

On his return home, he also addressed an immense popular assemblage, in the open air, at Philadelphia, and another at Louisville, Ky. His speech at the latter place was thus noticed by George D. Prentice, Esq., the well known and able editor of the *Louisville Journal:*

The Hon. S. S. PRENTISS, of Mississippi, arrived in our city yesterday, and, although worn down with the fatigue of a long and tiresome journey, he yielded to the wishes of the public that he should address them. The intelligence that he would speak at 8 o'clock, flew through the city, and, at the appointed hour, there was assembled the largest collection of people that we have ever seen in this city on any similar occasion. Men of both the great political parties—old men, whose venerable forms are rarely seen in public assemblies, were there, in such numbers as to crowd the room to overflowing. So great was the anxiety to see and hear this gifted and wonderful man. He spoke more than two hours; and when we say that his speech was the most profound and logical argument to which it has ever been our fortune to listen—clothed in the purest and most classic language and imagery—and glowing with the fire of true genius, animated by the loftiest patriotism—we have given but a beggarly description. It was a speech that will long live in the memory of all who heard it; and if Mr. PRENTISS had never before said or done anything worthy of notice—had never stood up as the

colossal denouncer of Repudiation—had never before dropped manna from his lips—this splendid effort alone would place him among the men of the first talents of the age. He uttered great truths, such as public men too often timidly forbear to speak upon. We shall have occasion again to recur to this speech; in the meantime, in the name of the Whigs of the city, we tender to the orator thanks for the instruction and delight which he afforded us.

It may not here be out of place to mention more particularly some of those "great truths," referred to in the above extract, and which formed the staple of all Mr. Prentiss' political addresses in 1844.

His speeches, during that year, were unquestionably the greatest he ever made. Perhaps they were not more brilliant than those of 1840; but they were more grave and replete with deeper political wisdom. They related not so much to mere questions of public policy, as to those great ethical and social principles, which are at once the foundation and the informing soul of a Christian Republic. "What," he exclaimed in his speech at Portland, "what are mere political measures, what are the questions of tariff, bank, or internal improvements, in comparison with the question of our immediate honor, character, and perpetuity as a virtuous, law-abiding nation?" In 1840, the Upas tree of Repudiation was just in bud; in 1844, it had already overshadowed a whole State, and infected the financial atmosphere of several others with its poisonous influence. In 1840, the Dorr Rebellion, in Rhode Island, had not broken out; in 1844, it had effloresced and disappeared.* These

* The reader will find an account of the so-called *Dorr Rebellion*, and of the doctrines advocated by its leader and his followers, in Daniel Webster's Argument made in the Supreme Court of the United States, on the 27th of January, 1848, in the case of Martin Luther against Luther M. Borden and others. (See Webster's *Works*, vol. vi., p. 217, *et seq.*) It is a masterly exposition of the true principles of government in our American system of public liberty. Here are a few sentences

events were novel in the history of the United States, and both showed, though in a different way, into what depths of folly, madness and dishonor, unprincipled politicians,

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from the introduction of the argument: "There is something novel and extraordinary in the case now before the court. It is well known, that in the years 1841 and 1842, political agitation existed in Rhode Island. Some of the citizens of that State undertook to form a new constitution of government, beginning their proceedings towards that end, by meetings of the people, held without authority of law, and conducting those proceedings through such forms as led them, in 1842, to say that they had established a new constitution and form of government, and placed Mr. Thomas W. Dorr at its head. The previously existing, and then existing, government of Rhode Island treated these proceedings as nugatory, so ar as they went to establish a new constitution; and criminal, so far as they proposed to confer authority upon any persons to interfere with the acts of the existing government, or to exercise powers of legislation, or administration of the laws. All will remember that the state of things approached, if not actual conflict between men in arms, at least the 'perilous edge of battle.' Arms were resorted to, force was used, and greater force threatened. In June, 1842, this agitation subsided. The new government, as it called itself, disappeared from the scene of action." Mr. Dorr was afterwards indicted for treason, and tried by a jury, before the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, in 1844. He was convicted of treason, and sentenced to imprisonment for life. Some time before his death, the remainder of his punishment was remitted, and he was set free by act of the legislature of the State.

Few events have so tested the character, or vindicated the strength, of our system of popular government as this Dorr Rebellion. For a time it attracted not a little sympathy thoughout the country. Influential journals and distinguished politicians lent it their countenance and support. At great political meetings in other States, resolutions were passed, endorsing the rebellion, and complimenting "Governor Dorr" in the highest terms. The ground taken by its advocates, is excellently described by Mr. Webster in his argument before the Supreme Court: "It is alleged that Mr. Dorr, instead of being a traitor or insurrectionist, was the real governor of the State at the time; that the force used by him was exercised in defence of the constitution and laws, and not against them; that he who opposed the constituted authorities was not Mr. Dorr, but Governor King; and that it was *he* who should have been indicted, tried, and sentenced. This is rather an important mistake, to be sure, if it be a mistake. 'Change places,' cries poor Lear, '*change places*, and *handy-dandy*, which is the justice and which is the thief?' So our learned opponents say, 'Change places, and *handy-dandy*, which is the governor and which the rebel?'" "I believe," Mr. Webster remarks in closing, "that no harm can come of the Rhode Island agitation in 1841, but rather good. It will purify the political atmosphere of some of its noxious mists, and I hope it will clear men's minds from unfounded notions and dangerous delusions."

The opinion of the Supreme Court, sustaining Mr. Webster's legal positions, (Mr. Justice Woodbury dissenting) was delivered by Chief Justice Taney, and will be found in Howard's *Reports of the Supreme Court of the U. S.*, vol. vii. p. 1, *et seq.*

Two propositions from the argument of the counsel for the plaintiffs in error, in

armed with a few plausible sophisms and seizing upon the balance of party power, may seduce large masses, or even a majority, of the people. They made manifest, not the weakness of our Republican Institutions, but the source of their peril. Patriotic and thoughtful men were impressed by them with the importance of more diligently instilling right views of law into the popular mind, and disenchanting it of the dangerous fallacy, that Government is a mere creature and slave of the will of a majority.

The following are some of the main points in Mr. Prentiss' speeches in 1844. The first, and that which he enforced, perhaps, with most earnestness, was the moral and constitutional *limitations of the popular sovereignty.* The incessant and idolatrous adulations offered to the people by the demagogues of the stump and pen, he regarded not only with disgust but as fraught with unspeakable mischief; and he thought that even many right-minded politicians were infected with grievous error on this subject. The people, although the source of power, are yet as truly under restraint as the individual; they are bound and fenced in by their own constitutions, by the laws, and by the sacred immutable principles of honor and duty. This he declared to be the peculiar strength and glory of our Republican Institutions, that, in establishing them, the people of these United States had, by free and solemn covenant, bound both themselves and their posterity for ever, to walk in the paths of order, union, and public justice. They had voluntarily subjected themselves to the authority of a permanent National Government, and in the exercise of its legitimate prescribed

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this case, will indicate the general ground assumed by Mr. Dorr and his party: "The sovereignty of the People is supreme, and may act in forming governments without the assent of the existing government." Again: "Even when a subsisting constitution points out a particular mode of change, the People are not bound to follow the mode so pointed out; but may, at their pleasure, adopt another."

functions this authority is over them, and entitled to their loyal support and obedience. They stand to it, individually, not in the relation of sovereigns, but of free citizen-subjects. Their duties are as inviolable as their rights ; their will can act rightfully only in accordance with the constitution and laws of the land ; all action contrary to these is licentious and revolutionary. Even the whole American People, in their majestic national unity, are hedged in by the divinity of a Higher Power.* That the people—above all, that a mere majority of them—have the right to do what they please ; that their naked will is superior to law, or that it can change at all the intrinsic moral character of an action —all this he denounced as the very madness of political error. The sovereignty of the people no more gives them unlimited freedom than the personal liberty, or self-government, of the individual empowers him to steal and commit murder.

Another great truth, closely allied to the foregoing, and which he often dwelt upon, was the moral and practical *limitation of real freedom itself.* All genuine popular liberty, he contended, involves, among the very conditions of its existence, restraint and self-denial ; in other words, is impossible without order, moderation, sacrifice, obedience, and a

* The fine lines of George Withers, the old Puritan poet, are quite as applicable to Congress and the Sovereign People as to King and Parliament:

"Let not your King and Parliament in one,
Much less apart, mistake themselves for that
Which is most worthy to be thought upon :
Nor think *they* are, essentially, THE STATE.
Let them not fancy, that th' authority
And privileges upon them bestown,
Conferr'd are to set up a majesty,
A power, or a glory, of their own !
But let them know, 'twas for a deeper life,
Which they but represent,
That there's on earth a yet auguster thing,
Veil'd though it be, than Parliament and King."

spirit of compromise. The instant you begin to embody the idea of liberty in free permanent institutions, you find that it is a principle eminently practical, comprehensive, and severe in operation ; its conditions are many and stringent ; it is not a hundredth part as simple and pliable as despotism. Being the highest and most diversified state of the individual and social man, it demands the highest elements of character —intelligence, virtue, industry, courage, honor, and self-control. True liberty, therefore, can no more be *given* to a people than general virtue or wisdom ; it must be won by hard toil and discipline, and it must be maintained by constant vigilance. A government, whatever its name, is usually little more than a reflection of the character of a nation. Hence, we often find a people with nominally free institutions, actually living under an anarchical despotism. They may *call* themselves free, without being so, just as a man may call himself rich, while, in fact, a miserable bankrupt ; or honest, and yet be steeped in fraud. Mr. Prentiss made hardly a speech in 1844, in which he did not take occasion to express these sentiments, and to impress them upon the popular mind with all the force of logic, and with the happiest illustrations. Liberty unrestricted and unqualified by written, or unwritten constitutions, laws, customs, and moral order, he affirmed to be a dream of political visionaries. Our American system of Liberty is no such dream, but a grand historic Institution ; striking its roots deep into the soil of the Past, essentially practical in its character, and having the source of its strength, progress, and perpetuity, not in any mere abstract theory of human rights, but rather in the sound political sense, civic habits, patriotism, and law-abiding instincts of the people.

Another point which he used to enforce, is the tendency of a free government to produce—not, as many suppose, an absolute equality, but the *greatest possible inequality* of

human condition. In his speech at Portland, he unfolded this somewhat paradoxical proposition, with exquisite skill and beauty. So far as Republican Institutions aim to give to all men an equality of rights, they do indeed put all upon a level. But then they aim, also, to give to every man, whatever his position originally, an open field ; and to encourage every man in gaining, keeping, and enjoying as high a degree of eminence, in all respects, as by the powers with which God and nature have endowed him, fairly and fully exerted, he is capable of attaining. This, of course, as men are constituted, must produce the greatest possible variety of conditions. The noblest unity involves the most and richest diversities. What endless inequality marks the beauteous order, harmony, and free life of Nature ! The azure space is open to all birds alike ; but the owl cannot match the lofty flight of the eagle ; nor the humble sparrow soar and sing as the lark. The best and freest form of society is that in which the talents of each individual, whether public or private, find the amplest scope, and are unfolded with the greatest ease.

Another point was the real unity and interdependence of the different classes and interests of society. This topic, however, entered into almost all his addresses in 1840.

Soon after his return from the North, business called him to New Orleans. While there, a public meeting of the citizens was held, with a view to raise funds for procuring a statue of Franklin, by the eminent American artist, Hiram Powers :

An address on the subject (writes Col. Peyton), was to be delivered by that accomplished gentleman and ripe scholar, the late Richard Henry Wilde, who justly merited, and will continue to enjoy, a national reputation as a profound jurist and enlightened statesman, as well as a man of cultivated taste and poetical

genius. Mr. PRENTISS, who chanced to be in the city, was taking an after dinner nap, when some friends entered his room at the St. Charles, and aroused him, saying, "Come, PRENTISS, let us go and hear Wilde make his speech on the Fine Arts; everybody will be there." "Agreed," said he; "I should like to hear what can be said on that subject."

Mr. Wilde came prepared elaborately, and delivered an exceedingly able and appropriate written address, every line of which bore the impress of taste and genius; but, as is often the case in prepared speeches, it lost something of its interest and real merit in the delivery. A group of gentlemen, who were collected near the door, withdrew before the conclusion, and were regaling themselves, hard by, at the bar of the St. Charles, when suddenly the church resounded with a burst of applause. "Wilde is warming up!" some one remarked; another and another demonstration followed in quick succession, each more earnest than the other. "*It must be* PRENTISS; *let us go!*" was the exclamation; and sure enough, they found him in the midst of one of those almost inspired and rapturous bursts of eloquence, which seemed to come over him involuntarily, and which transported the enlightened audience.

Several spirited notices of this impromptu address appeared at the time, or since, of which the following is the pith:

It was a happy thought, which suggested the meeting at Mr. Clapp's church, on Tuesday evening. Richard H. Wilde, Esq., made an admirable address. He entered into an argument to refute the sneering objection sometimes made to the culture of the fine arts, that they are effeminating, luxurious, and mark the decline of virtue, courage, and popular liberty. He passed in rapid review those golden periods of Art, which have, from time to time, marked the history of every free and prosperous nation of the civilized world. He pointed to the career of Michael Angelo, and dwelt most felicitously upon those commanding traits of his character, which formed in him the bright and

unique combination of statesman, soldier, poet, painter, architect, and sculptor. He dwelt upon the American associations with the name of Benjamin Franklin. He then imparted a peculiar interest to the character and genius of our countryman, Powers, by relating what the Italians—those who professed the same art, and ranked first in their own land—what Thorwaldsen, the great Danish sculptor, had said of this youthful foreigner, who had come among them unfriended by the patronage of princes, and unsustained by the voice of fame.

Excellent speeches were made also by Judge McCaleb and Mr. Eustis. But S. S. Prentiss actually spoke diamonds and rubies, like one inspired. He is, indeed, an orator, between whom and the best of his contemporaries we have ever heard here, there is a *hiatus valde deflendus*—a tremendous abyss. No sooner was it noised through the assembly, at the close of Mr. Wilde's address, that he was in the church, than a simultaneous, loud, and irresistible call was made for him. It would be folly for us to attempt to pursue the orator in the progress of his glowing and resistless eloquence, or to seek to portray its effect upon the souls of his listeners. As it were by a common impulse, the audience seemed to rise up and draw nearer to him. Those who were contained in pews, leaned forward, eagerly awaiting each thought as it came forth in royal apparel from his richly stored and wonderful mind.

We noticed among the fairer portion of the audience, some whose countenances were lighted up with the very spirit of the orator; the reflection, as it were, of his own soul. Thus, for nearly an hour, did Mr. Prentiss enchain the ear of every listener, and almost hold the breath suspended on every lip. As he warmed with his theme, he developed the grand idea of the Genius of Civilization hovering over our land, scattering the seeds of knowledge, founding the halls of science and the galleries of art. He dwelt especially upon the nature and power of sculpture, showing how the hallowed veneration of the patriot is kindled by the ideal presence of the illustrious dead, whose *statues*, he said, would be as national and household gods, to keep alive the spirit of patriotism, and appal,

by their aspect of intellectual majesty, the enemy of freedom and virtue.

He drew a gorgeous picture of Napoleon crossing the Alps, and while he trampled under foot the political rights of the Italians, pausing, awe-struck, in presence of their masterpieces of art. So graphic was his tongue, that you seemed to see the modern Alexander, with his steel-clad warriors, threading the snows of Mount St. Bernard, gazing from its dizzy height upon the sunny plains of Italy, and then, like the eagle, that hastes to his prey, rushing down to seize upon the spoils of Art. And here he enumerated some of the most celebrated remains of ancient sculpture, individualizing each by a few masterly touches, and with a splendor of diction which would have done honor to Burke, when dwelling upon the Sublime and Beautiful. His description, indeed, was the very thing itself—the idea of the sculptor embodied in words instead of marble. There stood, distinct almost as if actually present to the eye, the Goddess, sprung from Ocean's foam, the same smile upon her lips, untrembling before the god of War. There reclined the dying Gladiator, with no consciousness in his death agony, save the memory of his far-distant wife and little ones, upon the banks of his native stream. There, too, is seen the god of the Golden Bow, his eye still flashes, his lip glows, his nostril is dilated, as he follows the course of the shaft which transfixes the heart of the Python.

Winkelman himself could not have exhibited a greater enthusiasm for this noble art. But what most astonished his auditors, especially those among them who had a professional acquaintance with the subject, was the minute and technical accuracy of his description. Had he been bred to the easel, or wrought from his youth in marble, he could hardly have seemed more familiar with the details of the studio. But all this, with Mr. Prentiss, was intuition. We believe that the whole was the spontaneous thought of the moment; the rude outlines that floated through his mind, being filled up by the instinctive teaching of his surpassing genius.

In conclusion, Mr. P. spoke of the feelings of pride with which

he should visit the galleries of art, collected by the wealth and taste of our citizens, and he could not doubt that specimens of art would soon abound, where he now beheld so many lovely specimens of nature.

There is, undoubtedly, one error in this account ; an error constantly fallen into by those who were not intimately acquainted with Mr. Prentiss' habits of mind. The speech in Mr. Clapp's church was regarded by all who heard it as a miracle of eloquence, and whatever is said of its beauty, power, grandeur of conception, and wonderful effect upon the audience, may readily be credited. But no man learns facts, or is able to give an accurate description of pictures and statues, by mere intuition ; this is a task beyond the faculty even of creative genius. The artistic allusions in this speech can be better explained on the simple theory of quick observation, a fine memory, and glowing imagination. The truth is, Mr. P. had read much on the subject of art, and was by no means unacquainted with such specimens of sculpture and painting as our own country affords. He was particularly fond of good engravings. During his visit to Portland, a few months before his address at New Orleans, I found him alone, one afternoon, poring, in apparently deep study and meditation, over the plates appended to a German edition of the works of Winkelman. Whether he was musing upon the political address he was to make that evening, or upon the beautiful figures before him, I could not tell ; but in either case, he looked, as I recall his attitude and expression, a perfect picture of pensive, contemplative abstraction. Upon my entering the room, a conversation arose upon the subject of art, and we examined together several of the engravings lying before him—among others, the very ones referred to by him in his Franklin address.

Here follow some of his letters, written after his return from the North :

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

BELMONT, *May* 19, 1844.

DEAR GEORGE :—

I have been so much engaged since my return, that I have not absolutely had time to write. As soon as I got back, I went to New Orleans; from thence to Jackson to attend court, and from Jackson to Jefferson County, on the same business. From the latter place I returned day before yesterday. Altogether, I have not been at home a week. You may judge how much I am fatigued and annoyed, at such continued labor and absence. Indeed, I am quite worn out, and would give anything to spend a month or two in perfect seclusion. I hope by the middle of June, I shall be able to leave my business for a while; if so, I shall take Mary and Jeanie and spend a few weeks at Panola. I need rest and relaxation, both physical and mental. I found Jeanie wonderfully improved; you would scarcely know her. She is all the time running about, and chattering like a little magpie. Mary is pretty well, but her health is delicate. I have made no progress in the settlement of my affairs, and very much fear that I shall not be able to extricate myself from my embarrassments. I have almost fully determined to wind up here during the next year, and then go to New Orleans to live. I think I should succeed in my profession there; and I am utterly disgusted with this State, especially this portion of it. Vicksburg is becoming every day more vulgar and despicable. I suppose you have seen in the newspapers, an account of the quarrels and bloodshed, which have occurred recently. While I was in New Orleans, the *Sentinel* came out with one of its usual blackguard articles, abusing myself and Major M——. Mr. Downs believing Mr. R—— had something to do with it, called him to account. They had a duel, and Mr. Downs * was slightly wounded. The

* This young gentleman, whose ardent devotion to Mr. PRENTISS may be inferred from the above incident, fell a prey to the cholera, in the spring of 1849. He was

next day, Doctor M—— undertook to chastise the editor of the *Sentinel* for some remarks in his paper of that morning. In the scuffle Doctor M—— was killed. All this was during my absence. On my return, I found Mr. Downs had acted rashly in the matter, though from generous motives. The article was editorial, and there was no proof that it was written by Mr. R——. I did not think there was sufficient ground to authorize me to call him to account; and as for the editor, I would not touch him with a pair of tongs. He is a more miserable and degraded wretch than they have ever had before, and no gentleman would think for a moment of noticing him. I do not, therefore, apprehend any further difficulty, and I shall certainly keep clear of anything of the sort, as far as practicable. There is nothing new here. Mary and Jeanie join me in much love to you all.

TO THE SAME.

PANOLA, La. *July* 3, 1844.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I have been very remiss in my correspondence; but Mary, I believe, has fully supplied my place. The courts are now over, and I hope to have a few weeks, leisure. I came down here three days ago; Mary and Jeanie three weeks before. You may imagine how much I was gratified in rejoining them. We shall stay here about two weeks longer, and then return to Belmont. I find all very well, but a good deal distressed on account of the high water, which is likely to destroy all the crops in this vicinity, Mrs. Williams' and Mc.'s among the rest. Jeanie is excellently well, and full of all sorts of monkey tricks. Her mother and grandmamma say she is the smartest child living; but that is probably exaggeration. I was much chagrined at hearing of the annoyance and pain you all suffered from those vile newspaper reports. If I had, for a moment, imagined that such false accounts would obtain, I should have

on his way from Washington City to New Orleans, and one of his last acts was to request that a lock of his hair might be transmitted to Mr. P. as a token of his dying remembrance.—ED.

written sooner; but I could not anticipate such falsehoods.* But it is all over now, and there is no probability that you will be again troubled in a similar manner. I shall not be ever easily drawn into a difficulty, nor do I believe that any one really desires to get into one with me. Mr. Downs, though from the kindest motives, acted very foolishly, and took up in my absence, an attack in the *Sentinel*, which I should not, for an instant, have thought of noticing. I shall always remember his friendly motive, and feel much gratified at his speedy recovery. He received only a flesh wound, and is now entirely well. If I had been at home, nothing would have happened. But enough of this poor business.

We are delighted to hear that you are licensed. I congratulate you most sincerely, my dear brother, on your entry upon the duties of your high profession. The calling which aims at the moral improvement of the human race, is undoubtedly far beyond that which has in view only the amelioration of its physical condition; and knowing, as I do, the purity and sincerity of your motives, I do not doubt that you will accomplish great good in your vocation. Mary joins me in love to all, and Jeanie sends a handful of kisses.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *Aug.* 9, 1844.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I have just received your two letters of the 23d and 25th ult. and am gratified to hear that you are all well, and that you are in such excellent spirits. I would give a great deal to spend the summer with you, and enjoy the cool sea breezes and fine fishing excursions, for which Portland is, in my opinion, unequalled. We have here the hottest season I ever witnessed. So far it has been pretty healthy, but I apprehend a good deal of sickness when the river falls. As yet it is at its full height, with no signs of receding. I wrote last, I believe, from Panola.

* The report was that he had fallen in a duel.—ED.

We returned to Belmont several weeks ago, and since then I have been to New Orleans. Half my time, for the last six weeks, has been employed in answering invitations to political meetings; not only in this region, but throughout the Union. I have been solicited to attend *barbecues*, *mass-meetings*, *conventions*, &c. &c., in Louisiana, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and I know not how many more States. I have declined them all, save one. I have determined to go to Nashville, where a great convention is to be held on the 21st. I shall start in two or three days, and return immediately after the convention. It will be a very brilliant affair. Crittenden will be there, and probably Leigh, Preston, Rives, and others, of equally imposing names. I was invited by some 500 ladies, as well as by the regular committee; nevertheless, I should not go, but for some important business I have at Nashville. Mary urges me strongly to go, and as the trip may result in much advantage to my affairs, I feel it my duty to do so. It will afford me a good opportunity of testing myself against the "big guns." I will not fail to give you an account of the affair. On one account, I am glad that I am going: I shall be able to set myself right in relation to the reports which have circulated about my change. I should have noticed them before I did, but for my repugnance to coming out in the newspapers; it looks so egotistical. But I could not stand the idea of deserting Clay, to join Polk.* We are deter-

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* The following is the card referred to:

"*To the Editor of the 'Vicksburg Whig.'*

"DEAR SIR:—

"I have, with surprise and mortification, seen it reported in several public prints, that I had withdrawn from the support of Mr. Clay, on account of his course in relation to the Annexation of Texas. It is not with a view of obtruding my humble opinion upon the public, nor for the fashionable purpose of defining my position on the Texas question, that I ask the favor of a very small space in your columns; but for the purpose of relieving myself from the obloquy of the report alluded to, and of asserting that it is unfounded and untrue in every particular.

"I look upon the Whig cause as far more important than the Texas question, and would rather see that cause triumphant, and Mr. Clay elected, than to witness the annexation to the United States of all the territory between here and Patagonia.

mined to have Abby with us, and will take no excuse; so tell her to prepare to spend the winter South. Mary is writing her about it to-day, and I will write her presently. Mother must spare her, for we want her much; you must come too, if possible. Mary is as well as could be expected. Jeanie is a little fountain of health and brightness. Both of them join me in affectionate regards to all.

Besides the invitation from five hundred ladies of Nashville, referred to in the preceding letter, he received similar invitations from Louisiana, and from different parts of Mississippi. This is a thing almost without precedent in our political history. But an extraordinary interest was felt in Mr. Prentiss by his fair countrywomen of the Southwest. His eloquence had an irresistible charm to their ear. This, added to the strong admiration which many of them cherished for Mr. Clay, explains a step so unusual. If it were proper to publish these invitations from the ladies of Tennessee, Louisi-

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I believe the question of Annexation, as now presented, to be a mere party question, brought forward expressly to operate on the Presidential election, and that it ought not to have the slightest influence upon the course, or action, of any member of the Whig party. Indeed, the ground taken upon it in this quarter, that those who support Mr. Clay are unfavorable to Southern institutions, and opposed to Southern interests, is as insulting as it is false, and should arouse an honest indignation in the breast of every true Whig.

"I am proud of the Whig party and its noble leader; they are worthy of each other, and of the glorious triumph that awaits them both. I would rather vote for Henry Clay for President than for any man now living, and most assuredly shall I do so in November next, unless, in the meantime, he turns Locofoco; and, but for the pressure of my private business, I would not hesitate to devote the time between now and the election in persuading others to do likewise. I have not deserted the Whig cause in the time of its adversity, and certainly shall not do so upon the eve of victory.

"In conclusion, I will say, if ever I join the Mormons, I shall attach myself to Joe Smith, the founder of the sect, and not to one of his rival disciples. And should I ever turn Locofoco on the question of *the immediate annexation* of Texas, I will support John Tyler, not James K. Polk.

"Very respectfully,

"S. S. P."

ana and Mississippi, with the names attached, they would form a most graceful testimonial to Mr. Prentiss' character and eloquence. A brief extract from one or two of them will show their spirit :

Need we apologize for our course in assuming to ourselves the *honor* of extending to you this invitation. We cannot think we are overstepping the bounds laid down for us even by the most fastidious. For if we, the daughters of America, are not interested in the welfare of our beloved country, who, we ask, can be? Could you be sensible of the interest and anxiety with which we shall watch the arrival of your answer, and how many happy hearts and faces would be in readiness to await your coming, your response would be, *I will come!* A letter of acceptance from you, we have no doubt, would draw together a greater number of persons than one from any other gentleman in the Union—that of our beloved CLAY only excepted. So, we all say, *Come!*

Another letter says :

We must beg leave to protest against the conduct of the committee of gentlemen, in leaving unrepresented, in their invitation, the claims and wishes of that portion of our community which your sex, we believe, has long since agreed to acknowledge as the better part—conduct which imposes upon us the necessity of speaking in our own behalf. The ladies of this place generally are most anxious to testify their respect for the character, ability, and valuable public services of the favorite and most distinguished son of Mississippi.

The following letters addressed to the Gentlemen and Ladies of Holly Springs, Mi., may serve as specimens of scores written by him in the course of the summer :

VICKSBURG, *July* 20, 1844.

GENTLEMEN :—

On account of absence from home, I have but just now received your favor of the 20th ult., inviting me, on behalf of the Whigs of Marshall County, to attend a "mass meeting of the Whigs of Mississippi, and adjoining States," to be held at Holly Springs, on the 7th August next. I lack terms in which to express my grateful acknowledgments for the flattering manner in which you have communicated to me the wishes of my Whig friends in Marshall. Were it possible for me to do so, I should not for a moment hesitate in complying with their request. Such, however, is the condition of my private business, that I am compelled, for the present, wholly to forego the pleasure of participating in the movements of our friends in different quarters of the country. Sorely against my inclination, I am forced, by personal considerations of an imperative character, to decline all political invitations. I should be glad to make an exception in the present instance, but it is out of my power.

I trust it is unnecessary for me to say, that this conclusion has not resulted from any diminution of my zeal in the Whig cause, but from pure necessity. I have never felt deeper interest in our cause, nor greater confidence in its success. All the omens are auspicious. Victory already perches upon our banner; and I do not doubt that a triumph, more signal and glorious even than that of 1840, will crown our exertions. I feel, with you, no ordinary solicitude that Mississippi may be found in the ranks of honor and patriotism. By casting her vote for our noble and gallant "Harry of the West," she will emerge at once from the filthy pool of Locofocoism in which she has been so long plunging—and clad in clean Whig garments, she will soon forget the stained and dishonored rags which the dominant party has for years compelled her to wear.

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Permit me again to express my deep regret that I cannot be

with you in person, as I shall be in heart and feeling; and my most grateful thanks for the flattering terms of your communication.

With sincere respect,
Your obliged friend,
and obd't servant,
S. S. Prentiss.

S. S. PRENTISS TO THE LADIES OF HOLLY SPRINGS.

Vicksburg, *July* 22, 1844.

Most Respected Ladies:—

With sentiments of profound gratitude, I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 15th instant, inviting me to attend a Whig Mass Meeting, to be held at Holly Springs, on the 7th of August next. It will be vain for me to attempt an expression of the grateful emotions which have been aroused in my heart by this distinguished mark of the condescension and kindness of the fair Whigs of Marshall. It was with no ordinary regret that I found myself under the necessity of declining the invitation of my Whig brethren, my friends and comrades in the great and glorious cause which has so long united our hearts, and tasked our exertions. Far greater, however, is my chagrin and mortification at being compelled to say "nay" to your most flattering and honored request. I trust you will be assured that nothing but rude and imperative necessity could, for a single instant, prevent me from complying with your slightest wish.

It will be to me a most serious misfortune to be absent, on an occasion when the gallant Whigs of North Mississippi shall assemble in council, and their patriotic deliberations be rendered holy by the cheering sympathies of the daughters of the land; whose bright smiles will sustain man even in a bad cause, but in a good one, like ours, render him irresistible. With such aid as you bring us, fair ladies, success is inevitable; and not more did our Whig fathers owe to the Whig mothers of the Revolution, than we owe to their noble daughters. While we acknowledge

our inability to pay, we will at least never *repudiate* the pleasing debt.

Permit me again, ladies, to tender you my most profound acknowledgments for the very great honor you have conferred on me, and allow me to express my fervent wishes for the health and happiness of each one of you.

With sentiments of respectful regard,
I am, your most devoted
and obedient servant,
S. S. Prentiss.

Mrs. Prentiss requests me to thank you, in her behalf, for the kind tender of your hospitalities, and to express her regret that she will not have the opportunity of availing herself of them.

The Hon. James C. Jones—then Governor of Tennessee, and now one of her Senators in Congress—has kindly furnished the following reminiscences of Mr. Prentiss' visit and speeches at Nashville.* In no part of the country had he warmer friends and admirers than in Tennessee; a State distinguished beyond almost every other in the Union for the political intelligence of its citizens.

JAMES C. JONES TO THE EDITOR.

Memphis, *Feb.* 12, 1851.

Dear Sir:—

It gave me sincere pleasure to receive your letter of the 31st ultimo, because it conveys to me the intelligence that

* In a letter, dated Nashville, July 18, 1844, Governor Jones writes to Mr. P.: "This is the battle-ground of the nation, and I know, my dear sir, it is incompatible with your generous nature to refuse to come to the rescue. All eyes are now turned to Tennessee. It is not my habit to flatter; and, if it were, my appreciation of your character would forbid its attempt with you; but I must say, in all candor and truth, that there is no man living who would be so kindly and cordially received in Tennessee: no man living can command so large a crowd as yourself. All wish to hear you, particularly since Polk is a candidate. Then come; come for your country's sake."

our country is to enjoy the benefit of a biography of one of her most distinguished and talented sons. Some of the pleasantest days of my life were spent in the society, and under the hospitable roof, of your lamented brother. The only regret I feel, in connection with your letter, is a consciousness of my utter inability to do justice to his genius, as displayed on the occasion to which you refer. To give anything like an adequate conception of his two addresses at Nashville is simply impossible. The *night* speech, especially, was an amazing exhibition of oratorical power and beauty. I have heard many of the most gifted of our country; but I never heard, never expect to hear, eloquence to compare with that!

There are numerous incidents, connected with your brother's visit to Tennessee in 1844, possessing great interest to his friends and admirers. Many of them I treasure in unfading memory; and should I ever enjoy the pleasure of meeting you, shall take much satisfaction in relating them. The space of a letter forbids the attempt; it would require a book.

The occasion of his visit was one of unusual interest. It was a time of the greatest excitement. The distinguished of almost every State in the Union—of both political parties—had previously been with us. The fame of your brother had preceded his coming. The universal solicitude to see and hear him amounted to an enthusiasm, intense and painful; thousands upon thousands were assembled, eager to gratify this desire. I was one amongst the few of our citizens, who had heard him and enjoyed his personal acquaintance.

The boat, on which he came up the river, reached the vicinity of the city in the night. Repairing thither early in the morning, I found Mr. Prentiss deeply impressed with a sense of the magnitude and importance of the occasion, and painfully alive to the responsibilities that attached to him. I never before saw him manifest half so much anxiety. He seemed to think that his reputation was at stake; he was to stand where Clay, Cass, Crittenden, and others like them, had stood; he was to appear before thousands, who had come up from nearly half the States of the Union. His whole demeanor indicated a deep and solemn feel-

ing of the fiery ordeal he was called to pass; he also spoke of it to me with the utmost concern. Loving him as a brother, I sympathized fully with him, and felt the greatest solicitude for the result.

When he reached the city, he was met by a great multitude on the shore, and conducted to one of the hotels, where he was welcomed, and where he made a short but eloquent response. From the hotel he was conducted to his quarters, the private residence of Mr. Morgan. This was the day preceding the meeting of the Convention. I visited him often during the time that intervened. I found him still anxious and thoughtful, far more so than was usual with him.

When the hour arrived, I called to accompany him to the ground. The procession was most imposing. The crowd almost innumerable, with banners, pageants, music, and all the other "pomp and circumstance" of a Presidential Election campaign. The scene was beyond measure exciting. Mr. Prentiss was quiet, thoughtful, and somewhat melancholy. He seemed to feel as one who had a mighty work to do, and was resolved to "do or die."

The Convention assembled. The people gathered eagerly, with anxious countenances, around the stand from which the address was to delivered. It was a memorable occasion—one I shall never forget; one that thousands in Tennessee, and other States, can never forget. It was to me a moment of most painful excitement; you know something of the feeling of one friend for another under such circumstances.

The time came. He arose, *calm* and *collected*. The interest of the vast assembly was so intense that it seemed you could see and feel it—that it was something material, something that could be touched. He had not completed his first sentence before the agony with me was over; I knew that all was well. My friend was safe.

He entranced the immense crowd, that was estimated by *acres*, for about two and a half hours. The applause was terrific. It would be impossible, at this late day, to give even a tolerable outline of his speech; but the argument, sentiments, illus-

trations, manner, were alike admirable. The effect was overwhelming, and his few friends who were accustomed to hear him, felt that it was the test effort of his life—a monument on which he might securely rest his fame. But so captivated were his hearers, that no entreaty was of any avail; they were unwilling to disperse for their homes, until they had again heard that manly, eloquent voice that so thrilled their souls—the music of which still lingered around their hearts like the expiring strains of some enchanting melody.

It was decided that he should address the Convention again at night in Court Square. And here, in my judgment, did your gifted brother place the cap-stone on the pyramid of his fame. I have heard renowned orators; I have been transported with visions of fancy and hope. I had heard S. S. Prentiss, and thought I had heard him do all that man *could* do. But the most magnificent display of intellectual power, beauty, and eloquence, that I ever heard, was reserved for this occasion. I confess I was a great admirer of Mr. Prentiss; but I feel certain that my feelings do not mislead my judgment of this speech. Friends and political opponents all join in tributes of praise and wonder in memory of the splendid genius which shone forth on that night!

I accompanied him to the ground. The Square was crowded with an immense assembly of ladies as well as gentlemen. He opened his address with exceeding beauty, and at each step seemed to attain some greater height, until all minds, hearts, and imaginations were carried captive at his will. In the midst of this transcendent effort, he was taken with stricture of the chest, to which he was subject, the result of over-exertion in speaking. He stated to the audience his indisposition, and expressed his regret that he could not conclude his address. The voice came up from thousands of sympathizing hearts, "Sit down and rest," "*Don't quit!*" "We will wait on you." Such was the solicitude manifested to hear him still further, that he was compelled to yield to the suggestion.* After sitting down for a few mo-

* It is said that as Mr. P. fainted and sunk into the arms of his friends, one of them (Gov. Jones himself, I have been told) exclaimed, in the enthusiasm of the

ments, the attack passed off, or abated; whereupon he arose and continued his address, with undiminished interest, to the close. And with it closed, I repeat, the most consummate exhibition of oratory which I ever witnessed; and should I be spared to the most venerable old age, I never expect to hear it equalled.

I have thus given you a very hasty sketch of this occasion. If I had time and ability, gladly would I devote them to the pleasing task of doing justice to the memory of one of the noblest specimens of humanity I ever saw—S. S. PRENTISS.

Respectfully your servant,

JAMES C. JONES.

Here follows Mr. Prentiss' own brief account of the Convention:

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

NASHVILLE, *Aug.* 26, 1844.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I have been here just a week, and you are, doubtless, surprised that I have not written you before. But, in truth, I have not been able. I broke myself down by speaking, and can now barely drag a pen over paper. I shall give you but little account of our Whig doings here, as you will see it all in the papers. We have had a most glorious Convention; far exceeding in numbers and enthusiasm anything I ever saw. My own opinion is, that there were 40,000 people present. It is admitted that this Convention exceeded in number by one-third, at least, the great one of 1840, and to the same extent, exceeded the Democratic Convention of the 15th. Altogether, it was the most magnificent affair I ever witnessed. I made the opening speech, and another on the next day. I think they were both good speeches—I mean, as compared with my other efforts. I do not think I have ever spoken better,

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moment, "Die, PRENTISS, *die!* you will never have a more glorious opportunity!" —ED.

taking into consideration the object and circumstances. As far as public estimation is concerned, I have no cause to complain. They heap compliments upon me till I am almost crushed beneath them. My reception has been more than kind, it has been enthusiastic; and if I find all well at home, I shall not regret my trip. You will learn all that has occurred through the public papers. I think I shall be able to accomplish my private business here, though it is not yet concluded. I leave to-night in the stage for Millspoint, on the Mississippi, and trust to be at home by Saturday. I should have started day before yesterday, but was so entirely exhausted by my efforts that I was quite sick, and unable to travel. I am better to-day, and shall hurry for dear Belmont. Who knows what has happened there since my absence. I am under great anxiety. Should anything evil have happened, I should never forgive myself. But I only intended to drop you a line now; I will write again when I get home. My love to you all.

Your affectionate brother,

S. S. Prentiss.

From this time Mr. Prentiss was constantly engaged in the pending contest, until his strength became so exhausted as to force him to stop. Soon after his return from Tennessee, he attended a Grand Mass Meeting at Natchez, to which he was invited by a large number of ladies. Accompanying their invitation, was a letter from a well-known professional gentleman of Natchez, in which he says: "No person but yourself, in my opinion, could have induced the ladies to join in requesting a political address. You will duly appreciate their sensitiveness; and the privacy, or *freemasonry*, which their delicacy desires above all things, will, I am sure, be cordially observed by you. I do most earnestly hope that you may be able to spend at least one day with us. I can say, in sincerity, that nothing could more gratify and cheer us, one and all, male and female,

than your presence." The following is an account of this splendid barbacue :

Before describing Mr. PRENTISS' great speech at Natchez, in 1844, let me say a word of the day and the scene in the midst of which it was delivered. Long will that day and that scene be remembered by the people of Natchez, and by the thousands of strangers who sojourned within its gates! The thunder of cannon ushered in the dawn, and at sunrise the whole city was alive and moving. It was a glorious morning in early autumn, and the clear, elastic atmosphere rung with the merry laugh of the multitude, as they eagerly thronged the streets. In all directions, too, were heard fine strains of martial music. For some hours every avenue that led to the city was lined with horsemen and carriages; while one delegation after another, from the river counties, from New Orleans, and the neighboring parishes of Louisiana, were still arriving. As the steamers on which they came announced their approach by the firing of cannon, then "rounded to," and, amid the loud hurrahs of the crowd assembled on shore, landed them at the sound of drums, trumpets, and clashing cymbals, the effect was quite electrical.

At length, all things being in readiness, the gay Whig army moved on to their grand Mass Convention. It was a noble civic spectacle. Ahead of the procession rolled a Big Ball, emblematic of the saying "*The ball is in motion!*" "*Keep the ball rolling!*" It was sixteen feet in diameter, revolved in a huge frame work supported by four wheels of solid iron, and was drawn by three yokes of oxen. It was covered with patriotic sentiments and the names of the different States, and was, in every respect, a colossal affair. But it would require a book fully to describe this gorgeous procession, or the excitement of the scene when it reached the ground. Some of the banners were really beautiful specimens of art. There were *one hundred and sixty-six* of them, wrought by fair hands, chiefly for the occasion; all embellished, too, with graceful mottoes, breathing love of country and admiration for HENRY CLAY.

The place selected for the meeting was beautiful in the extreme; it was one of those spots so common about Natchez, where wealth and taste have guarded the primitive forest, and left it to luxuriate in its own native splendor. A lovely grove, surrounding a natural amphitheatre, it reminded one of Milton's description of Paradise:

> —— "Overhead upgrew
> Insuperable height of loftiest shade—
> Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
> A sylvan scene; and, as the ranks ascend,
> Shade above shade, a woody theatre
> Of stateliest view."

The rostrum, which commanded the whole scene, was supported on either side by a gigantic old oak; in its architecture it might have served for a model; its proportions were so correct, that it looked like the porch of some rural temple; its wings were adorned with floral pyramids, between which the speaker stood while addressing the multitude; around its white columns wound wreaths of rich evergreens, myrtle, and jessamine, circling upwards to the central arch, where the choicest flowers were entwined in the the folds of our national flag; upon the keystone rested a speaking bust of Henry Clay. In the rear of the speaker hung a portrait of the Father of his Country. At the foot of the steps that led to the platform were magnificent orange-trees, connected with the ascent above by rows of costly exotics. These embellishments all betrayed the exquisite taste and elaborate handiwork of woman. In front of the "stand" were ranged comfortable seats for some three thousand persons; those designed for the ladies being covered with the finest prints of a new cotton factory just established in Natchez. Above this ground stretched out, until lost in the distant shade, tables, groaning with every possible luxury; while costly equipages, in picturesque groups, were scattered all around.

After a prayer by one of the clergymen present, and the ceremony of presenting banners, the Convention was addressed by several speakers, and then proceeded *en masse* to dinner. The dinner was a genuine specimen of our Southern barbecues. It

resembled a splendid board spread for a marriage festival; the provisions were so ample, too, that a besieged city as large as Natchez might have subsisted upon them for weeks on full allowance.

Dinner being ended, the cry ran through the crowd, like an electric shock: "PRENTISS *is going to speak!* PRENTISS *is going to speak!*" All hastily rose, as one man, and hurried back to the amphitheatre. As soon as order was restored, the immense throng sent up a shout that rang out loud and clear through the grove, "PRENTISS! PRENTISS!" The scene at this moment was picturesque and stirring in the extreme; it was enough to create eloquence from beneath the ribs of death. As Mr. PRENTISS, in obedience to this summons, limped forward and presented himself between the beautiful floral columns we have described, he was assailed with long continued shouts of welcome. He seemed to be deeply impressed with the events of the day. Indeed, several circumstances combined to render the occasion one of peculiar interest to him. Along this grove he had often ridden, some sixteen years before, an unknown Yankee schoolmaster; when not a few of the proud dames and aristocratic planters, who were now eager to bask in the sunshine of his genius, would have hardly deigned to notice him. Others he saw before him, who even then had taken him by the hand, and ever since been among his most devoted friends and admirers. He perceived, too, in the crowd, leading members of the opposite party, for whom he cherished a warm personal esteem. Added to all the rest, this was likely to be the last political speech he would ever make in Natchez; as, indeed, it proved. He was, too, just from the great Whig Convention at Nashville, and the glory of that vast gathering seemed to be still playing about his brow.

And now how vain would be the attempt to daguerreotype that speech! It was, unquestionably, one of the greatest in thought, beauty, power, and visible effect, that even Mr. PRENTISS ever made.*

* Those who heard this speech seem all to have had the same feeling about trying to describe it. One gentleman wrote, a day or two after, "that he would not dare

"——— His gestures did obey
The oracular mind, that made his features glow,
And when his curved lips half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way."

I can only give a brief outline of his argument—merely tell you its subject-matter. Beginning, in a simple strain, with a highly poetical appeal to the wood-nymphs who sported among the trees, he skillfully turned it into a series of elegant compliments to the ladies, whose presence threw a halo about the deliberations of the day. Nothing could exceed the knightly courtesy with which he always addressed the fair sex. How he would lean towards them, call them "the blessed of all God's handiwork;" compare their eyes to "day-stars;" and then revel, like another Puck, among the radiant smiles called forth by his own happy images! He had special reason to be gratified on this occasion, for it was solely in obedience to a pressing invitation from the ladies that he had consented to be present.*

From this graceful exordium, the orator passed, by an easy transition, to the graver part of his task. Referring to the multitude he saw before him, and to the still larger multitudes he had recently witnessed in Tennessee, he said that he could not look upon such immense exhibitions of "congregated humanity" without terror; and he earnestly prayed that, in November, the principles of our Government might be so firmly settled as to render unnecessary for half a century another such uprising

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to attempt a report of this tremendous address. It was a magnificent burst of eloquence; an outpouring of honest Americanism, love of the Union, the Nation, the Constitution—law, order, society, and religion; carrying death and destruction into the ranks of Locofocoism, Dorrism, &c." Another wrote: "Who could report that speech? who describe it? who give even an outline of it? Nobody could do it. As well might you attempt to write down the whistling of the whirlwind, the roaring of the tornado, the rumbling of the thunder, or the notes of the Æolian harp, as to make intelligible by the art of writing the speech delivered by Mr. PRENTISS, at Natchez, last Thursday."—ED.

* It is estimated that there were nearly a thousand ladies on the ground. Probably no orator had ever before addressed such a fair assembly in the Southwest. Not only were the principal ladies in Natchez and its vicinity present, but others had come from remote points of Louisiana. So great was the anxiety to hear Mr. PRENTISS, that some, unable to do so on any other condition, actually brought their young infants, and sat with them in their arms during the whole of his address.

of the people. (The audience, for some minutes, applauded this sentiment.) Nothing but great and deep-seated causes could produce such vast popular excitement. What were these causes? In answering this question, he entered upon an elaborate review of the measures and principles involved, as he believed, in the coming Presidential struggle. Having briefly considered the leading measures of public policy, he then passed to a discussion of *principles*. And here lay the main stress of his argument. Drawing a plain distinction between what he termed Democracy and Locofocoism, giving to the first the attributes of honesty and patriotism, he denounced the latter as destructive of order and government, and scathed it as with a hot iron. This was the chief topic of his address. Locofocoism he defined to be the *spirit of lawlessness*. Although wearing the mask and name of Democracy, it was, in truth, the incarnate fiend of anarchy and license. It abhorred all restraints, constitutional, legal or moral, which stood in the way of its own selfish and wicked schemes. It was at war with the first principles of our American system of Liberty, and unless conquered, the experiment of popular self-government must inevitably fail. How long could our Republican Institutions survive the general establishment throughout the Union of Repudiation and Dorr Rebellions? Yet these are the legitimate fruits of this lawless spirit. And was there no ground for alarm when such bodies as the great Democratic Convention, lately assembled at Nashville, invited the rebel Dorr as a *distinguished guest?*

Going into a profound analysis of the elements of the social system, he showed how order and legal restraint are essential to its existence. He then gave a sort of natural history of Locofocoism, tracing it back to the first great law-breaker, as described by Milton in his immortal epic, when

> ——— "him the Almighty Power
> Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition."

This spirit has been the source of infinite mischief ever since.

It spoiled Eden,* and the whole history of the world is replete with lessons on its disastrous influence upon human society. The Jacobinism of the French Revolution was an outbreak of it. Until of late years, we had deemed it incapable of growth on our American soil; but we were mistaken. It has already infected the body politic, and unless we could eject the poison, our liberties would, in the end, fall a prey to it.

Upon this dark and repulsive background of Locofocoism, he painted, in rainbow colors, the fair forms of law, freedom, and social well-being; three in name, but in essence one and indivisible. Having finished this grand moral picture, he proceeded to run a parallel between James K. Polk and Henry Clay, the two candidates for the Presidency. It was a fine subject for the power of contrast, and he handled it with consummate skill. Mr. Polk was, no doubt, a worthy man, of exemplary private virtues, and respectable as a politician. But beside the lofty figure, heroic qualities, and historical name, of his great competitor, he looked small and flat indeed. Mr. Prentiss' portraiture of Henry Clay, on this occasion, was, probably, one of the finest things he ever did. It was, in fact, his ideal of an American Statesman and President.†

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* Th' infernal serpent; he it was whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from heav'n, with all his host
Of rebel angels; by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
If He opposed; and, with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Rais'd impious war in Heaven, and battle proud.

Paradise Lost, b. 1.

† It was evident that his parallel between the candidates for the Presidency was to be a masterly effort, and no one was disappointed.

His portrait of Mr. Clay on the occasion, as we recall it to our mind, was one that can never be forgotten by those who heard it; there was a tangible massiveness and grandeur about it, as perceptible as if he had raised the mighty head of Mount St. Bernard from out of the alluvial plains of the Mississippi, and bid his enraptured auditory gaze upon the cloud-capped summit. There was also a softness and beauty, a perfection and minute completeness, that strangely harmonized. He opened the musty archives of antiquity for illustration; he drew from all modern quarters for

His peroration, which contained a touching apostrophe to the Union, melted his audience to tears, and left every heart glowing with a holy enthusiasm for the honor, perpetuity, and glory of the Republic. Indeed, the most striking feature of his speech was its patriotic American spirit. One single thought seemed to inspire and captivate him—the highest good of the whole country, North, South, East and West.

Such is a feeble outline of this extraordinary address. It was a marvel of oratorical power, and seemed to embrace the quintessence of all the political reflection of his life. At times the whole vast assembly were convulsed with emotion. Some wept, some laughed hysterically, some were pallid with fear. The plaudits were terrific, "*outroicing the deep-mouthed sea.*" They who heard that speech, will have marked September 5, 1844, with a white stone.*

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comparisons; and, still ascending, would replume his wings, soaring still upward in untrodden regions of eloquence, until he piled "Pelion on Ossa," and made the very reason of his audience tremble on its throne. Suddenly he paused, and with a voice as of a trumpet, asked, "Who is the opponent of Henry Clay?" His eyes flashed unwonted fire, and you saw him falling headlong from his dizzy height, but his very course marked the impetus of a destroying angel; you saw that there was a vial of wrath in his hand, a consuming fire in his eye; he fairly struggled and heaved with emotion. The foam dashed from his lips, and he repeated in defiant notes, "Who is the opponent of Mr. Clay?" and he then hissed the answer, "A blighted burr, that has fallen from the mane of the war-horse of the Hermitage!" The effect of all this upon the audience, under the circumstances, cannot be imagined. Shouts rose, such as come forth in victorious battle-fields, but which, save by PRENTISS, were never heard by the ear of the American orator.

But PRENTISS really carried no bitterness in his spirit; he bore down upon his opponents and poured in his broadsides of irony and sarcasm with the power of a man-of-war, but the moment the action ceased, he was ready to muzzle his gun, and succor the wounded and dying.—*J. B. Thorpe's Reminiscences*, 1851.

* "The finest political address ever made by your brother, is said to have been one delivered to an immense concourse of ladies and gentlemen at Natchez, in 1844. He himself thought it the greatest of all his speeches. I would suggest your writing to Mr. —— for an account of it, and also an incident which occurred during its delivery. A young man was so entirely *absorbed* in the speaker, that, unconscious of all about him, he seemed completely spell-bound. His body would sway to and fro, would rise and fall, in obedience to the changing sentiments; while his countenance indicated the most intense excitement and self-oblivion. Your brother whose attention was attracted by the young man's ecstatic appearance, afterwards declared it the greatest oratorical triumph of his life."—*Letter from Wm. C. Smedes, Esq.*, 1858.

One other speech ought not to pass unnoticed, inasmuch as it was his farewell address to Mississippi. It was at a Grand Two Days Mass Meeting, held at Jackson, early in October. The following is chiefly an abridgment of a contemporary notice in the *Vicksburg Whig*:

When the name of Mr. PRENTISS was announced, it seemed to us as if an electric touch had aroused the crowd; every face beamed with an intense interest and pleasure; and when he appeared at the stand, a simultaneous shout broke forth from every lip, while the twenty-six virgin representatives of the States gracefully raised their banners, presenting to the view of their gifted orator, at a glance, the bright galaxy of that glorious Union which he so ardently loves and so ably advocates. We fancied we perceived an additional lustre in his eyes, as he cast a glance of patriotic pride at the banner of his native State. And here we would willingly close; for a task is before us which we feel wholly incompetent to perform. Who can describe his speech without being guilty of mutilating a thing too precious to be touched by any but a master hand. He set out by explaning the various forms of government—monarchical, republican, &c.—and showing the conditions under which alone a people can wisely govern themselves. In this part of the speech, he illustrated, in a very beautiful manner, the necessity of knowledge and general education in a Republic like ours. He then passed to the Protective Policy, explained its operation, and contended that if any interest in America was more benefited than another by the Tariff, it was the cotton-growing interest of the South. He earnestly deprecated those invidious distinctions which the Locofoco leaders attempt to draw between the North and South, and showed in what a miserable, helpless plight the South would find herself, if the Union were dissolved. * * * But when Mr. PRENTISS spoke of his intention to leave the State of Mississippi —that this, in all probability, was the last political speech he would ever make in it—the effect upon the feelings of the audience baffles description. The eyes, which a few moments before

beamed with delight at his burning eloquence, now became dimmed with tears. A solemn gloom spread upon every face, and when he bid his old friends and admirers a kindly farewell, even those whose political differences had long estranged them from him, but who still loved their State, could not conceal their regret that it was about to lose one of its brightest ornaments.

This is the first time we have witnessed thousands shed tears at a political meeting. When Mr. PRENTISS closed, the audience sat perfectly motionless; although dinner was announced, not one moved; and not until the President called upon the Glee Club to sing a song, did the audience recover from the gloom which the closing remarks of Mr. P. had cast over them. We have heard many speeches, and praised them—we have read many, which we thought could not be excelled; but Mr. PRENTISS spoke, at this time, as no other man that we have heard or read of, ever spoke. It seemed as if all the gods had contributed to form him, and that the present occasion was set apart to call forth the richness of their gifts.

Many a time have we sat and listened to him with delight, and felt anxious to bestow upon him our humble meed of praise; but would curb our inclination, lest what we considered stinted justice might call forth the vituperations of unscrupulous and depraved party organs. But now that he is soon to depart from our State, we may, at least, join our humble voice to that of thousands of more competent judges. Yet, our joy at his greatness is dimmed by the recollection that we are soon to lose him. We feel, like thousands of our fellow-citizens, that Mississippi is about to part with her most precious jewel, a jewel whose value cannot be fully estimated until it is gone. Yes, the Whig party will lose the most able exponent of their principles, the bar its brightest ornament, and the social circle its very life and soul.

The following extract deserves a place here. It is from a letter of Joseph D. Shields, Esq., of Natchez:

You have received too many accounts of the great speech at Natchez, for me to attempt one. There was a magic in his name

which upset all preconcerted arrangements. On the principal day of that Grand Convention, an effort was made to bring on the speakers in a regular order of succession; but PRENTISS! PRENTISS! was the cry, and nothing could stay the tumult until he showed himself. His wonderful voice compassed the immense crowd. What most astonished everybody, was his power of making the masses comprehend the greatest and deepest thoughts. He clothed the abstruse philosophy of government and society with such plain, familiar, yet vivid images, that the most illiterate at once caught his meaning. The classical allusions and quotations from the poets, by which he also illustrated his subject, seemed never to weary his audience. His language was singularly correct. No matter how rapidly the grand and noble sentiments gushed forth from his inexhaustible mind, the words were always ready to clothe them in the most proper and graceful drapery. If, by accident, the wrong word escaped him, he would stop in his headlong torrent and correct himself, without the slightest confusion. The break, indeed, seemed to give emphasis to the sentence. I remember an incident of the kind, that happened while he was speaking at Rodney, in the Presidential campaign of 1844. His speech was, in part, explanatory of the one delivered at Natchez. That had been grossly misrepresented. Mr. PRENTISS said he wished not to be misunderstood; that his associations in that (Jefferson) county, in early manhood, were of the pleasantest character; that his friends there were among the most cherished of his life; that some of those friends were Democrats. He always distinguished, he said, between Democracy and Locofocoism. While he disapproved of the former and reasoned against it, he should ever denounce the latter. To him Locofocoism was *Lawlessness;* and, as he had said at Natchez, the first great Locofoco of the universe (*principium et fons veneni*) was the devil himself—for he had begun by violating the law, and advising others to do so.

In the course of his speech, he combated the position that the immediate annexation of Texas was necessary as a measure of defence against Mexico. He gave a graphic description of our country—its vast extent, resources, and power. Then turning

to the magnificent river flowing by, he spoke of the distant mountains *calcined* with coal. Although under full headway, he instantly stopped, substituted the right word, and then soared away like an eagle! I think his appeal to the young men, on this occasion, in behalf of the old Whig Chieftain, was the most rousing peroration I ever heard.

When commenting on Mr. Walker's Texas letter, which was so garbled as to suit the North and South, his rebuke was terrible. Grasping the two letters, and dashing them together under his feet, he wound up with the climax: "I wonder that, like the acid and the alkali, they do not *effervesce* as they touch each other!"

On that day, at Rodney, he spoke three hours. I met him in the evening, and found him utterly jaded and worn down. Even during the address, his physical frame was so exhausted that he was frequently overcome and compelled to stop; but the buoyancy of his spirit triumphed over bodily weakness. After every rest, he took a yet higher bound. Referring to his speech, he said to me: "I am like a weak horse running down hill—when I start I cannot stop." This, I believe, was the last time I ever conversed with him. He always treated me with affection, and wished me success in a tone of voice that I knew was sincere. When he went to Congress, I was in Virginia. In reply to a letter of mine, which, after making certain inquiries, congratulated him on his brilliant entrance upon public life, I remember how kindly he replied, and how he hoped a like prosperous career might await me.

The public often forced him to tax his wonderful powers far beyond his physical strength. They thus literally helped to destroy the idol they worshiped. He could hardly stop for an hour on a journey, without being waylaid to make a speech. A friend of mine, who was a professor in Centenary College, told me that Mr. Prentiss once happened to stop there. The boys heard of it, and insisted upon having a speech. Prentiss begged and entreated to be let off; but finally yielded to their entreaties, on condition that he was to have an hour to prepare himself. At the appointed time he rose and gave them a lecture

on Geography. The professor said that it was the most beautiful address he ever heard.

His speeches at Natchez and Jackson, as was to be expected, gave great offence. He thus alludes to the fact in a letter to Richard T. Archer, Esq., of Port Gibson :

VICKSBURG, *Oct.* 17, 1844.

DEAR ARCHER:—

I have just received, and read with much pleasure, your kind and friendly letter of the 15th inst. I fully appreciate and reciprocate your sentiments, and you do me no more than justice in supposing that political differences can never intervene between me and my old friends, among whom I am proud (and hope always) to number you.

I need not say, that towards the Locofoco party in this State, as represented, during the last few years, by its acts, as well as by a large majority of its leaders, I entertain feelings of the utmost disgust, contempt, and abhorrence. With regard to the opinions of the people in relation to me, whether Whig or Democrat (excepting always a small number of personal friends) I care not a fig. My exertions, such as they have been, have resulted entirely from a conviction of duty. I maintain the Whig *cause*, not the Whig *party*.

You have been misinformed both as to the character of my late speeches as well as of my health. My general health is excellent. I am suffering some little inconvenience from soreness of the throat and breast, caused by too great exertion in speaking, which has compelled me to decline all further political invitations; for I dare not risk the destruction of my voice, as my profession depends upon it.

My speeches have not been half as severe against Locofocoism as they used to be, and as you have heard in former days. All the accounts of my speeches at Natchez and Jackson, by the Locofoco press, or speakers, are false, and willfully and

maliciously so; I said no more than I *have* always said—than I *will* always say.*

* * * * *

But enough of this. I hope soon to see you, Archer, and we will then talk matters all over. You will not find the grasp of

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* The real tone of his speeches cannot, perhaps, be better indicated than by citing a few passages of a long and striking communication, addressed to him by an unknown gentleman of Vicksburg. It is dated Sept. 19th, 1844, and consists chiefly of an earnest argument and appeal to him on the subject of personal religion. The style shows a want of literary culture, but this is more than supplied by strong sense and ardent, friendly feeling. The allusion to Jacob's ladder, referred to in the extract, appears, from another part of the communication, to have been designed to typify the influence of social order and good laws in raising man above his mere animal life of "eating, drinking, and wearing clothes," while they open to him a vision of his higher nature, and of that moral end for which he was created.

"In compliance with the wish of my wife, we attended the meeting of the citizens at the club-room last night, and were very much gratified with the *spirit* and *sentiments* of your speech. And the very appropriate suggestions which you made in regard to Jacob's ladder, with the charitable sentiments which you advanced on the subject of opinions, induced me to think you were not quite so far from the Kingdom of Heaven as reports had led me to conclude. My dear sir, do you spend, and are you spent, for the propagation and maintenance of those great principles of Law and Order, which are the foundation of happiness on earth and in heaven? And do you not love God, who, for the honor and establishment of those principles, has taken upon Himself our nature? * * * * If you do not, why? Simply because you have been driven and drawn along the current of life with such interest and velocity as never to look, with any degree of steadfastness, to the Cross, the glorious Cross of Christ!

"I have seen you often, but never heard you until last night. I am unknown to you, and expect so to remain. Not that I am destitute of ambition; but for twenty years my ambition has been to love God, to live for God, to gain the highest place possible in His favor. Before last night, I never heard a political speech that I now recollect, though I have lived much in cities, and travelled much. I have never seen a President, nor an Ex-President; I ask favors of none but God, and desire none but such as are granted because of my relation to Him. By much reading of the Bible, by frequent and regular attention to private prayer, I cultivate the spirit of filial fear, and in proportion as I feel this, I feel no other fear.

"I mention these things for the purpose of making the impression that I am conscious of but one motive in introducing this address upon your attention—the almost irrepressible desire that your every thought may be brought into subjection to that Divine Law, which is '*holy, just, and good*;' and that all your powers and indefatigable energies may be engaged in the propagation of the principles of that Kingdom, which consists not in '*meat and drink*' ('eating, drinking, and wearing clothes'), but in '*righteousness and true holiness.*'"—Ed.

my hand less warm, because we happen, for a moment, to differ on political matters.

Very truly your friend,

S. S. Prentiss.

Mr. Prentiss, as might be supposed, was exceedingly chagrined at the defeat of Mr. Clay. He found it very hard to bear up under it with equanimity. Writing to a friend about the middle of December, he says :

I am perfectly disgusted at the result of the election; and almost despair of the Republic. Still there is some hope. The Whig party is really stronger now than it has been since the time of Washington. We have been beaten by the basest frauds and corruption; but the Locofoco party contains the elements of its own destruction. My advice is, that the Whigs fight on manfully, under the same name, and for the same principles. If locofocoism cannot be conquered, then the experiment of self-government has failed. The Whigs embrace three-fourths of the intelligence, moral character, and property of the United States, and also a majority of the *qualified* voters. These seem to me to be strong elements of success.

The result of the Presidential election of 1844 was, probably, the sorest political disappointment ever experienced in the United States. It is said that as the news spread over the country, thousands of strong men wept like children. Mr. Clay's success, at one time, had been deemed so certain, that the office-seekers among the Whigs were already busy in arranging a division of the "spoils." But with the great body of his supporters, Mr. Clay's election was, unquestionably, desired from motives of the purest patriotism. They honestly believed that his defeat would be a calamity, and his election a lasting advantage to the best interests of the Union. We are prone to make each new Presidential election the most important that ever occurred; a tone

of exaggeration is characteristic of the national temper, and can hardly be avoided in that contest ; each party is apt to think its own immediate success essential to the prosperity, if not to the existence, of the Republic. How many wise and good men prophesied that the election of Mr. Jefferson would ruin the country ! How many repeated the prediction in the case of Gen. Jackson ! Time has taught us that a Power infinitely stronger and more sagacious than that of any political party, guides the destinies of the Republic. And yet it cannot be denied that great issues, good or bad, are of necessity wrapt up in the character and public policy of the man who, for four years, occupies the Chief Magistracy of the nation. His executive power is almost imperial ; his legislative power, though indirect, is always great ; with a favoring majority in both branches of Congress, it is next to irresistible ; while his power of patronage, and—if he be a mere party tool—of direct bribery and corruption, is vast, inexhaustible, and despotic. No thoughtful patriot can contemplate the rapid growth, or the possible misuse and abuse of such power, without anxious foreboding. There seems to be only one other force strong enough to cope with and keep it in check —that of a free Public Press. Were it not for this Argus-eyed sentinel, our liberties might, humanly speaking, readily fall a prey to the overshadowing influence and Prætorian bands of an idolized but unscrupulous Executive. History will, perhaps, show that the importance of the election of 1844, after all, was not over-estimated. The immediate annexation of Texas—the overthrow of the Protective Policy —the Mexican War—the possession and sudden settlement of California—the Slavery agitation and Compromise measures of 1850—the Nebraska bill of 1854 :—these are some of the things which, whether for better or for worse, have followed in the wake of Mr. Polk's election.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XXII.

The following sketch of a speech on the Tariff, is, perhaps, entitled to a place here. I am indebted for it to Wm. C. Smedes, Esq., of Vicksburg. He writes in relation to it: "You will find enclosed *a speech*, delivered by your brother before an association of mechanics, called the 'Clay Straight-out Club.' I was one of his auditors, seated on a bench without a back, and surrounded by a miscellaneous crowd of people. It was a long speech, made manifestly without preparation; and struck me so much that I went home and, *calamo currente*, wrote it out, as well as I could, that night and early the following morning, *from memory*. On reading it to your brother, the next day, he highly commended my *diligence;* but remarked, that it was not *such* a speech as he would have made on the subject to a different audience, which I very well knew. I fear you may be disappointed in it, though, as a *reminiscence*, I know it will be a pleasure to you to read it. Of course, in the mode of its preservation, it has lost most of the richness, fire, and beauty of the original; but it will at least show the deep interest I felt in the speaker.

During the Presidential election of 1844, he took an active part, and had an intense desire for the success of Mr. Clay. The speech I send you, was delivered during that canvass. The town was full of illuminations, processions with transparencies, &c., and during his speech, the Jackson Clay Guards came in, marching from the dépôt to the sound of fife and drum. It created great stir in the meeting, which was held in a structure temporarily put up for the purpose. At first we thought it was our political opponents marching by, and coming up to our room to drown our speaker and interrupt the meeting; and this, you know, with our people, suggested knives and pistols immediately. But when it turned out to be friends, all the way from Jackson, wholly unexpected, coming in on us with beautiful banners, transparencies, torch-lights, and martial music, at nine o'clock at night, the excitement was intense and enthusiastic. Your

brother was full of it; after the meeting adjourned, and he was going off with his friends, amid the illuminations, he exclaimed, with his chest thrown out, and his hand upon it: 'What a glorious Whig transparency my heart would make!'"

Mr. President, and Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am highly gratified to see so numerous and respectable an audience assembled upon this occasion; and especially to the fair portion of my auditors do I feel under obligation for gracing this place, and honoring me, and those before whom I appear, with their presence to-night. But I am afraid they will be disappointed; I am afraid they will not meet in the character of the topics I propose to touch upon this evening, what, perhaps, they expected. My opponents, I know, have given me a reputation for mingling with my political discussions, severe and somewhat bitter denunciations of themselves. In the intellectual feasts which I am supposed to serve up on ordinary occasions, the condiments and spices are said to form no inconsiderable part of the banquet. At this time, I shall mingle neither salt, pepper, spice, or vinegar, with what I may have to offer you. I shall discuss one of the great questions upon which the two political parties, that now divide this nation, have taken contrary positions. I shall lay before you some statistical facts, and make certain deductions from them, touching a subject in which, Mr. President, you, and the association to which you belong, as a portion of the mechanical and manufacturing population of the country, are especially and most deeply interested.

In the consideration of this truly great question, involving, as it does, vital and permanent national interests, I shall, I trust, take no position, and indulge in no remarks, that do not properly belong to it, and that may not be listened to, if not with profit, at least with candor and attention, by either my Whig or Democratic friends. A portion of the Locofoco press have, I am aware, made most gross and slanderous statements respecting the character of the political addresses I have had the honor to deliver during the present canvass. They say I never make a speech, in which I do not abuse and insult every Democrat who attends. The charge is utterly false. It has never been my custom to abuse Democrats. I have spoken often in this city; and defy any man, who ever heard me, to say that I have abused the great mass of the Democratic party. On the contrary, I have always declared my belief that they were honest, that they wished well to their country—but were misled, misinformed, and mistaken. That corrupt leaders, influenced only by selfish and personal views, were guiding them astray, I have said often, and shall ever say. Their principles I have abused, and will abuse. For they are, in my opinion, ruinous to the best interests of the country—destructive, if ever fully carried out, of its existence even. Against these I have ever lifted up my voice. To make war upon these, my sword is ever in my hand. But the great body of the Democrats I regard as honest and patriotic citizens. They have no inducement not to be.

I shall not dwell to-night upon what I deem the most important and distinctive features of the two parties—the *tendencies of their political principles*. These, in my view, lie at the foundation of all the others. The tendency of Whig principles is conservative; that of Locofoco principles, destructive. In my opinion, the same

fatal and Jacobin doctrines which wrought the overthrow of France, and filled the streets of Paris with the blood of her best and noblest citizens; doctrines which, by extending the principle of liberty until it terminates in licentiousness, give free rein and scope to the foulest passions of the human heart—are vigorously at work in the *Locofocoism* of the Democratic party. In that party extremes meet. Some of the purest and some of the worst men are contained in it.

Seduced by the name, and to some extent by the nature of liberty, visionaries have ever been found, who were for giving it unlimited range. All law, they think but a restraint upon liberty, and that so far it is wrong. They treat man speculatively, as though he were all good; as though that period of millenial glory, looked for by the zealous Christian, when the lamb and the lion shall lie down together, were at this time a political fact. They forget the evil, that is part of man; and that law is essential to restrain licentiousness, into which liberty, among bad men, is sure to degenerate. But there are others, who advocate similar doctrines with a full knowledge of their inevitable tendency; they do it with the intention of turning them to their individual advantage. These are the men of whom the country has need to beware; men in whose hearts the principles of the French Revolution find a ready echo; men who, had they then lived, would have been prominent actors in those days of madness and terror. The two great parties have been travelling the highway of public prosperity together, until they have come to where the roads fork. The Whigs point to the same broad and beaten path, in which the Government has trod so long, and with such unexampled success. This, they say, is the old and safe road to national greatness—to national well-being. The Locofoco leaders point to the new path, and declare *that* to be the right way, heedless of the precipice upon the verge of which they tread, and down which it would little disturb some of them to see their blinded followers dashing, provided their own selfish ends can first be obtained.

I cannot to-night go into a discussion of the true nature of liberty and law, and show how the unlimited prevalence of either works, on the one hand, licentiousness, and on the other, tyranny; that the legitimate province of law is to regulate liberty; and that liberty without law would be more destructive to the order and the very being of society, more oppressive, cruel, and bloodthirsty, than even law without liberty. Nor can I now, as I would like, exhibit the tendency of the principles of Locofocoism to that state of things in which the salutary restraints of law are as threads of twine about the limbs of a sleeping giant.

I have chosen to-night a different subject; and dry and tedious as I shall be compelled to be—especially to the fair portion of my audience—I still hope to prove not wholly uninteresting even to them. Next to the great moral questions, which, as I have said, lie at the bottom of all the others, that of the tariff is, in my opinion, of the deepest importance. I shall, of necessity, be very desultory in my remarks. So vast a topic is incapable of being justly and adequately treated in a single speech.

I assert and trust, before I have finished, to be able to prove, that *a tariff for the purpose of raising revenue, but carefully and skillfully discriminating in the articles upon which the duty is laid, and the amount of duty, for the protection of American manufactures, while it is a cardinal Whig doctrine, is essential to the true prosperity and independence of our great Union.* I propose to establish this position; and further, to show that, even if the operation of such a tariff, were to *permanently* increase the prices of the manufactured articles upon

which the duty is imposed, even then it would promote the best interests of the country, and *especially of the cotton-growing South;* and I will then undertake to show, what seems so incomprehensible to some of my Democratic friends, that the *permanent* operation of a judiciously discriminating tariff is not to increase the price of the manufactured article, but diminish it.

I will here premise, that I do not think a prohibitory tariff constitutional, nor one that will raise a greater amount of revenue than is sufficient to defray the legitimate expenses of the Government in conducting its different departments, legislative, judicial, and executive, in the support of our nucleus of an army and of our gallant little navy, and to pay off that national debt, which a series of Locofoco administrations have entailed upon us. I could wish it were otherwise. I desire no surplus revenue. Man is not so honest that I would throw temptation in his way. But so firmly am I convinced of the policy of protecting our native industry to the positive exclusion, if need be, of the foreign manufactured article, that I could wish there were a clause in the Constitution authorizing the impost of duties to any extent without reference to revenue, even though we enriched the caverns of the ocean by casting the proceeds into its unfathomable depths.

But I do not now contend for any such position, nor do the Whig party. They, with their distinguished leader, all now stand on one common platform—that of a tariff for revenue, with, however, the amplest protection to American Industry that a wise and searching discrimination for that purpose can afford. This is the Whig view—this is Mr. Clay's view. The ultra-protectionists of the North, whose notions of the expediency and necessity of the tariff policy led them into the support of a prohibitory one; and those of the Whig party of the South, who had temporarily fallen into, or approximated, the error of Free Trade, have both abandoned their pernicious extreme, and, side by side with their fellow Whigs, all over the Union, are making common cause and presenting an unbroken front.

How stand our opponents on this important measure? What is their view of the tariff? What is Mr. Polk's view?

In this, and other Southern, cotton-growing States, they are in favor of the most unqualified free trade; some of them even go so far as to advocate direct taxation and an abolition of all tariffs. They would permit other countries to pour upon us their products and their manufactures without let or hindrance, while, at the same time, taxing to any extent they please whatever articles they consume from us. With the wisdom of the senseless moth, that flings itself into the bright flame, which at once attracts and destroys it, these Southern politicians have rush d into the fatal error of free trade. Dazzled by a delusive theory, and misled by the demagogical clamor of "*cotton, cotton, cotton,*" as if that were the only interest worthy of thought—as if this mighty country grew nothing but cotton, they have waged a war of extermination against American manufactures.

But the absurdities of this ruinous doctrine are such that but few statesmen, even of the Democratic party, uphold it. Silas Wright, their great champion in the North—to whom they look as the Samson that shall pull down the Whig temple in the Empire State—even Silas Wright denounces it as foolish and impracticable. In fact, our opponents are greatly divided on this question. In South Carolina they want a *horizontal* tariff, as they call it; in the West they want a *judicious* tariff, with incidental protection; that is, such protection as is, of necessity, incident to every tariff, but without discriminating in favor of our own manufactures. This is, as I understand, Mr. Polk's view. He is opposed to discrimination, and for letting

the manufacturers take care of themselves. He agrees with the Democrats of this State and the Southwest in hostility to protection and the building up of American manufactures. These are Mr. Polk's views. He is against protecting American labor by a tariff discriminating in its favor. These are his real sentiments, and on this ground he is openly advocated in the South; on this ground his friends place his claims to election.

But how is it in the manufacturing States? How is it at the North? How is it in the great State of Pensylvania, ribbed as she is with mountains of iron, with all the rich ores and minerals bedded in her bosom, or rather thrusting themselves into the eye of day, with her deep veins of coal, those mighty forests calcined ages ago, that run through her borders, and are the life-blood of her trade and noble industry—what says the old key-stone State to this doctrine? And what do her sister States, interested like herself in domestic labor and manufactures—what do New York, and New Jersey, and Connecticut, and Massachusetts say to these free-trade, anti-protection doctrines of the party here? Would any honest Democrat, or any Locofoco demagogue, dare to open his mouth in opposition to American manufactures in Pittsburg, or Philadelphia, or Newark? And yet, is it not known *here* that one of the most audacious political frauds, ever attempted in any country, is now being perpetrated *there?* Is it not known that, abused and denounced as are the Whigs here for their tariff notions, they are fighting for their lives to keep pace with the Democrats *there?* That in Pennsylvania Mr. Polk is actually declared to be a better tariff-man than Mr. Clay; while upon their Democratic banners are inscribed, not as it is here, "Polk and *Texas*"—the light of the "lone star" hardly glimmers in that Northern sky—but everywhere "Polk and *Protection*," "Polk and *the Tariff of* '42!" Mr. Clay is anti-tariff, they say, and by this desperate and fraudulent game do they hope to carry the great State of Pennsylvania. Will any Democrat of this State venture to go there and proclaim his anti-tariff views? No! the miserable South Carolina free trade doctrine, which is at heart the doctrine of Mr. Polk, is not more thoroughly scouted and despised in Pennsylvania by the Whigs than by the Democrats; and yet, by playing off a gross fraud upon the popular ignorance and credulity, it is expected to delude that important State into the support of this very doctrine!

I have laid down the proposition, that the principle of a protective tariff is essential to our true prosperity and perfect national independence. Before discussing this point, let me notice a distinction which exists in the mind of every intelligent person familiar at all with the question, but which, in its practical bearing, is often overlooked; I mean the distinction between the *principle* of the tariff—the ground on which it is based, the reason why it is beneficial—and the *details* of any particular law levying the duties. The principle is the foundation that upholds the details. They may be erroneous, they may even be oppressive, and need the correction of wiser legislation, without impairing in the least the firmness, or the truth, of the political doctrines upon which they are founded. The building may be rude and disproportioned, while it rests upon a rock. The architect may be unskillful, though his material and base are perfect. No man but a profound and experienced merchant, or one who has devoted years to the subject, can understand the details of the tariff, and know how they will work. How pitiable, then, it is to hear the low demagogues of the Democratic party abusing the tariff and calling in question the amount of duty levied on this or that article, when they do not know the names of one half of the thousand articles which form the subject of the tariff,

and upon which it operates; or the countries whence they come, or the mode of their production; or whether, indeed, they belong to the mineral, vegetable, or animal kingdoms! To listen to their strictures reminds one of the sage fly, that, perched once upon the dome of St. Paul's, observed some slight defect in the covering of the magnificent structure, and immediately, Locofoco-like, commenced pouring into the ear of a neighboring fly its criticisms upon that glorious work of Sir Christopher Wren. I have given some study to this great subject, and while I do not pretend to understand it in all its details and practical bearings, I have yet seen and know enough to fill me with disgust at hearing such crude objections urged against so vast and comprehensive a scheme.

Without going into details, then, except on one or two points, I shall address myself to-night to a discussion of the great principle itself contained in the tariff, and upon which its benificent operation depends—and that is, as I have already intimated, the protection, the encouragement, and the consequent growth of American manufactures. It is too apparent to need arguing, that an impost laid upon the foreign manufactured article protects the manufacturer of the same in this country, just according to the amount of that impost. The operation of the tariff, then, is to encourage domestic native skill and industry. It is to strengthen the hands and bind up the knees of our infant manufacturing institutions, until they have grown to the vigor of manhood; until they can walk alone in their own power, and no longer need assistance. It is known to every one that immense capital is required to put manufacturing establishments into effective operation. The buildings necessary for them are useless, except when employed to the end for which they were constructed; the spindles and other machinery, when not busy at their appointed task, are helpless, dead capital. England has already her millions upon millions of pounds sterling invested in manufactures. Her agriculture is in the hands of the few, and the wretched hunger-bitten population of her manufacturing districts are glad to get employment at any wages that will keep them from absolute starvation. Her buildings, too, are erected, her machinery is in order, her army of operatives are at their post, vessels freighted with her gold are in our ports to buy our raw material; with these great advantages marshalled in strong array against her, what could feeble New England do (I speak now in particular of her first manufacturing struggles) what could she do against such odds, with her comparatively meagre capital, without suitable buildings and machinery, while the broad fertile fields of the Mississippi Valley, and the rich prairies of the boundless West—where the toil of a day will buy an acre of ground—were alluring away her laborers? What, I say, could New England, poor and unaided, do in conflict with a rival so mighty, and armed with such immense advantages? What inducements could she hold out to capitalists to invest their money in so expensive and uncertain a venture? Is it not known to every person familiar with the subject, that England, for the purpose of nipping our manufactures in the bud, has sometimes poured her goods into this country at less than the actual cost of making them? that it has been her deliberate policy, at whatever temporary sacrifice, to crush our native artisans and industrial enterprise, in order to secure the whole market of the Union in her own hands? The experience of a few past years has given bitter yet salutary lessons to Northern capitalists. In their efforts to compete with foreign capital and foreign labor without adequate protection, great fortunes have been lost, incalculable money has been sunk, vast pecuniary distress and ruin have been encountered. No one doubts now, no one can doubt, it seems to me, that protection is essential to the safe

and profitable investment of capital in manufactures, that without protection their existence and prosperity are utterly precarious.

The simple question, then, is at once presented; Is it for our true, permanent welfare, should it be a great national policy, to encourage and sustain American manufactures? Is it desirable to have such institutions in the midst of us?

That we have all the natural elements and conditions of a vigorous manufacturing interest, coextensive with the Republic, nobody will deny. Within our wide-spread territory are produced most of the minerals, and nearly all the vegetable and animal substances, used in the mechanic and industrial arts; with so bountiful and benignant a hand have they been strewn around us, that they seem, like the very finger of Providence, to point out to us the path of national labor and enterprize, in which we should walk. There is written on them, in characters plain as day, the nature of one grand branch of our work as a people. With such facilities for manufacturing industry, and a demand for its products as universal, incessant, and well-nigh as urgent as that for food—for how could we exist without hats, and shoes, and wearing-apparel, and household furniture, and a thousand other articles, wrought by loom, anvil, or furnace?—with such inducements, I say, shall we encourage our native artisans and mechanics, and thus produce within ourselves the fabrics that we need? or shall we rather depend for them upon another nation? Shall we be in commercial and industrial vassalage to a foreign country, or shall we look only to "God and our native land?" These are the questions, and what patriotic heart does not at once leap with the response?

I go further; I take the position that every manufacturer added to the country is a blessing; every agriculturist who turns manufacturer is doubly a blessing. But I would not be misunderstood. I do not place the manufacturing above the agricultural interest. Far from it. I conceive the great, the leading, the upholding interest of this country to be agricultural; and it is the light which manufactures reflect upon agriculture, it is the helpful relation which they sustain to this fundamental pursuit, that constitutes their beauty and glory in my eyes. A beauty and a glory which the South—aye, the cotton-growing South—have as good reason to admire as any other section of the Union. Every man, who from an agriculturist becomes a manufacturer, is still a consumer, while he is no longer a producer. He must live; he and his family must still eat; they no longer gather from the earth a subsistence, and they must be supplied from the agriculturist who does. What man needs to be told, that when the consumers are increased, or remain the same, while the producers are diminished, the value of the article produced, other things being equal, must increase in a corresponding ratio? Why, there are some 500,000 men, as I learn from the most authentic statistical sources, now engaged in manufactures in the United States; upon an average, I suppose, each of these men must have three persons dependent upon him for subsistence, making in all about 2,000,000 of people in one way or another dependent upon manufactures for their means of support. These are all consumers of the fruits and productions of the earth, and not producers. They must be supplied by the agriculturist, and, to the extent of their need, must increase the demand for breadstuffs and meat, and, of course, their price.

Suppose, now, that these 2,000,000 of our population, thus engaged in or dependent upon manufactures, consume, on an average, each fifty dollars worth of breadstuff a year, or between thirteen or fourteen cents a day. That will make $100,000,000 worth of grain and breadstuff they will consume annually. To this add

twenty-five dollars a year, that they will probably, nay, certainly, average in the consumption of meats—and that will be some seven cents a day—or $50,000,000 more a year. Thus you have $150,000,000 of food annually consumed by those who do not raise a dollar of it. I believe the annual average cotton crop of the United States is two millions of bales. At $30 per bale, which all admit is a full price, it will yield $60,000,000 in money; and yet these despised manufacturers consume, of agricultural products used as food, nearly three times as much as the entire cotton crop of the whole South, which raises such an outcry against them, is worth! Yes, even in their infant state, just tottering, as it were, upon their feet, and trembling at every breath of popular feeling, lest they be destroyed, these contemned, derided, and ignorantly abused manufacturers, actually consume, of the labor of the planter, of the toil and stock of the farmer, nearly thrice the value of the whole cotton crop of the United States! Why, one would have supposed, from the manner in which the demagogues and narrow-minded politicians of the South boast themselves of their cotton, that *that* constituted the whole and sole production of the country! But I shall come to that presently.

Suppose, now, fellow-citizens, that by destroying American manufactures—and the destruction of a proper tariff of discrimination, as I have shown you, would inevitably tend to such a result—suppose now that these 2,000,000 of persons, thus dependent on that branch of our national industry, were thrown out of employment; they are not like the impoverished and stricken workmen of England, thereby exposed to starvation. No! thanks to that benevolent Providence which has given us such a noble country to inhabit and enjoy, the wide and teeming and free earth is all before them where to choose. Agriculture lifts her beckoning hand, and with cheerful smile and welcome voice, invites them to partake of her bounties. They, in their turn, become producers. But what must be the effect upon the fruits of agriculture? Where is the market for the $150,000,000 worth of provisions that they consumed? The cotton planter may sell his 2,000,000 bales of cotton, and receive his $60,000,000, because England must of necessity take it, until she has provided the means of cultivating it herself. But the farmer, the grain-grower, the stock-raiser, and all the other varied representatives of agriculture, where will they receive the $150,000,000 which their own folly and blind zeal have destroyed?

Suppose there were in the country *no manufactories at all;* what then would the farmer do? Why, the very shoes, hats, clothes that he wears, the axe with which he fells the forest, the spade and shovel with which he delves into the ground, the plough wherewith he traces the furrow into which the "*bare grain*" is dropped, to be changed by the prolific earth into "*the full corn in the ear*," all are the work of the manufacturer; will he do without these, and hundreds of other [illegible] unknown to their convenience, our comfort, and all the necessaries of life that, for this very reason, we are quite unconscious of the heavy [illegible] spare will be these things, or will he look to a foreign land for them?

What a spectacle would this Union present, if we were nothing but an agricultural people; if all the efforts, energies, and enterprise of this mighty nation were turned alone to the cultivation of the soil! Why, we should be a huge and naked giant; powerful, but unwieldly and blind. We should be at the mercy of the rest of the world, half barbarians, and held in vassalage by every manufacturing country far and near. This, it is true, is an extreme case, and yet it is fair to present it; for as you approximate such a condition by the destruction of manufactures, so the

results I have described must inevitably follow. Were we, on the other hand, devoted exclusively to manufactures, a nation of Cyclops, and working only in forges and factories, the general effect, though different in form, would be equally disastrous. Gaunt famine would, ever and anon, press upon us with its heavy hand, while nakedness, hunger, and misery would, sooner or later, be the common portion of the laboring classes. Is there nothing in the recent history of the manufacturing districts of Great Britain to throw light on this subject? To be sure, such an extreme state of things can never happen in this country. Land is too abundant and too free; and as we have no law of primogeniture, wealth, upon the death of any great landholder or property owner, becomes scattered along a thousand channels of inheritance and distribution, enriching the whole population through which it passes. Agriculture will always afford an outlet and escape from the excess of manufactures; while such is the fortunate condition to which, as I trust, we are happily coming, that manufactures will always regulate agriculture. [Here Mr. P. gave one of his grand images in illustration of the sisterly relations between Agriculture, Manufactures, and Commerce; but it could not be reported.]

Who, then, fellow-citizens, who that loves his country and desires to see her "proudly eminent" among the nations of the earth, is willing to strike a fatal blow to that great manufacturing interest, which is so vitally connected with her highest prosperity, strength, and glory?

"But how," exclaims your selfish and narrow-minded politician, who is blind alike to the interests and to the glory of his country, "how is the South, whose cotton is *not* eaten, to reap any advantage from those things you have described?" I will show you directly. But let me first ask, Is there nothing in this great Union but the South? Is cotton the only product of our wide-spread land? The South! the South! is always in the mouth of the Southern demagogue, as if no other section of the Republic was to be thought of or cared for. The South, fellow-citizens, is a part of the Union, it is the part in which I live and which I love; but it is not all the Union! And if the great mass of my countrymen enjoy inestimable blessings, as the fruit of a specific public policy, which yet operates somewhat less favorably upon the South, I have heart enough to rejoice in the highest good of the whole, assured that no part can be without its share, if not the largest share, of the benefit. But too much stress is laid in the South, even by good and candid men, upon the principal staple of their own section, and its claims in the legislation of the country. It is not generally known what relation it bears to other productions. I hold in my hand a work, which is in itself of high character and repute, but which, upon this question of the tariff, will be esteemed by my political opponents as of the utmost weight. It is Hunt's *Merchants' Magazine*. It contains statistical tables, compiled principally from the census of 1840, which exhibit the annual productions of the agricultural labor of the United States. You will be surprised to learn how some of them rank with that of which you have heard so much. Of the article of wheat, raised in the United States, there were 100,000,000 bushels. I am not familiar with the price of wheat, but if there is any practical merchant in the audience who can tell us, we shall be able to come at its value. (A voice, 80 cents). Well; at 80 cents, the crop would be worth $80,000,000; nearly one-third more than the whole cotton crop of the United States. Of oats, there are raised in the Union, ,000,000 bushels, which, at 15 cents, is worth

Of hay, ,000,000 tons, worth $120,000,000, double the value of the whole cotton crop. And here, too, is a subject in which the fair portion of my audience are

interested. By the labor of the hands of our thrifty countrywomen, in the manufacture of the single article of milk into butter, cheese, &c., a sum of $30,000,000 is realized, equal to one-half the price of the whole crop of cotton. And so I might continue through the entire list of agricultural productions, the value of which in the aggregate is more than a score times as great as that of our own vaunted staple. For I have not spoken of rice, of tobacco, of sugar, of hemp, of rye, and a host of minor articles, which yet are extensively used, and in the mass highly valuable. All these productions are fostered, encouraged, increased, and find a market, and a *home* market, very much through the operation of the tariff. And shall we then not retain a system, fraught with such benign results?

But I proposed to show that even the cotton-planter is benefited by a protective policy in the increased consumption of, and consequently the increased demand for, his staple. Under the operation of the present tariff, where before the noise of the shuttle and the busy hum of employment had been silenced, renewed and successful attempts have been made to open manufactories. During the past year, as I am informed (I speak in round numbers, and should I be inaccurate it does not affect the validity of my argument), during the past year our American manufactories consumed over 400,000 bales of cotton. This year it is but fair to presume that they will use 500,000 bales, which is one-fourth of the entire crop, and for which, as experience shows and facts demonstrate, the Southern planter is sure of a better price than he will get abroad. For there is along our own shores a system of *free-trade*, which I glory in, which from the mouth of the Sabine to the mouth of the St. Croix, presents a seacoast of some 4,000 miles in length, open to American sailors, and to them only. That is the sort of free trade I go for. Now I say, the Southern planter sells his 500,000 bales to the Northern manufacturers at a better price than he could get abroad. They can afford to give more. They buy it without a duty. The English manufacturer pays a duty. Here, then, is a certain demand for one-fourth of the whole crop of the South in a free-trade market, unhampered by custom-house restrictions, unimpeded by tax or impost of any kind. This home-market is the legitimate fruit of a wise tariff. But this is not all. England is a manufacturing country. For ages her capital and her resources, to a great extent, have been invested in this kind of industry. Her buildings, and her machinery, and her starving population, cannot be idle. Government dare not, for its existence, permit it. Manufacture she must. And if one market fails, she will force open another. She will compel some half-barbarous nation, like the Chinese, incapable of defence or resistance, to take her cutlery and her calicoes, and thus find a vent for the labor of her population. Let this country manufacture as it may, and largely as it may, it will not materially diminish the manufactures of England. She must work up her accustomed portion; so much cotton she will have, whatever it cost: thus, by the operation of a protective tariff, increasing the home consumption, England herself becomes a still better market to the Southern planter. And is this not fruit worth gathering?

But I promised to prove also, what to many of my Democratic friends is a great stumbling-block, that the effect of the tariff is eventually to diminish the price of the manufactured article, or, at least, not to raise it, even though, at first, a temporary rise may appear to be, and really be, the result. And here I will answer what is a difficulty with many. They think and say, that the levy of an impost must add so much to the price of the article. That the tax must fall wholly on the consumer. This is not so; and that it is not so will be at once apparent, by the

reflection that the consumer is not *obliged*, in the great majority of cases, to buy, while the manufacturer, to keep up his business, is obliged to sell. He must sell, and make the smaller profit. So the loss would, at least, be shared. If all things remained as they were, the tax would, no doubt, fall on the consumer. But things do not remain the same. The very object of the tariff is that they shall not. Immediately our own manufactories are at work, and capital gets fairly invested in them, they must go on; others, however, have also sprung up; competition takes place, and with competition, its invariable accompaniment, a reduction in price, until, in a space of time scarcely credible, the article is manufactured in this country at rates fully as low as prevailed before the tariff; frequently lower. The history of the various tariff laws and their operation proves this beyond cavil or denial; and the very result is thus effected which seems so surprising. The matter may at once be illustrated by an example near home. Suppose but one steamboat running between this city and New Orleans, and that there was no other medium of travel or transportation; suppose, to use the favorite word, this boat had a "*monopoly*" of the trade, and charged enormous prices for freight and travel. Now suppose one of your citizens were to say, "I will build a boat in opposition to this 'monopolist,' if you will give me at first higher prices to justify my investment of the capital. I will enter into the trade, compete with the present boat, and force her to reduce her fare; and then, when my capital is once fairly invested in the boat, and the business begins to prosper, I can and will reduce my charges until we both fall to reasonable rates, or are forced to do so by other boats still coming into the trade." Would not this reasoning be just, and is it not daily exemplified and acted on by sensible men around you? And yet such is the simple and natural effect of the tariff, when it gets into full, and fair, and permanent operation.

But there is another objection against the tariff, though found generally only in the mouth of the partisan demagogue; it is, that the manufacturers are *making money* by it. That some of them have realized twenty per cent. on their investments; that it is "a monopoly" in their hands; and that, therefore, the legislation of the country operates partially for them. Before I combat the truth of this objection, I must express my deep contempt for the source from which it generally emanates. It is one of those low and miserable attempts to array the poorer classes against the rich, which I never see without sentiments of abhorrence. It is the emanation of a base envy which denominates every man, who by industry, and skill, and talent, has accumulated a little reputation and property, an aristocrat; which looks upon wealth legitimately engaged in commerce or other employment, as a "monopoly," and, appealing to the vilest passions of men, would array society against itself, to the utter destruction both of society and of government. Society must consist of all the varied relations and interests of life. All its members are vitally related to each other, and to the whole body. Every one is bound to contribute his modicum of intelligence, morals, industry, and enterprise to the general stock. The minutest particles of the twig which I hold in my hand, are held closely together by an inevitable law of cohesion. Every particle of matter in the universe, by a similar law pervading nature, is attracted to this twig, and it in turn to them; and when I thus let it fall, true to its instincts, it seeks the body which, being largest, attracts it most powerfully. So ought society to be framed. There should be no jarring elements nor discordant parts. There need be none. Government should be one beautiful and harmonious whole, where each might pursue, unmolested of the other, his own interests. In this, our free and broad land, there are no distinc-

tions in society except what men may make for themselves. Stephen Girard, a poor French boy, landed in Philadelphia, without friends and without means, and yet, in a few years, had accumulated an immense fortune. John Jacob Astor, with his millions of dollars, now tottering upon the verge of the grave, commenced life a penniless adventurer. In a few years where will be his immense fortune? Scattered into a hundred hands, distributed in fertilizing rills throughout the whole country; perhaps not accomplishing a single wish of its accumulator, yet fulfilling its inevitable destiny of enriching and benefiting the entire body. The rich man of to-day is the poor man of to-morrow, and the reverse. Wealth in its continuance is uncertain, and held by the frailest tenure. He, then, fellow-citizens, is your bitterest enemy who would incite you against the rich man; he is himself a victim of the worst of passions. There are, there can be, no permanent monopolies in this country. Wealth here, like water, will seek its level. Wherever capital finds a safe and lucrative investment, it will be made. That this is so, is shown in the fact that Maryland is largely engaged in manufactures. Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky, and Missouri, are all turning their attention in that direction. It has been stated that slave-labor is best fitted for manufactures; the slaves are more docile, more under control, more uniform, will work longer, and are less expensive. Should these calculations and expectations prove true, we will no longer hear the cry of monopoly or against protection. But the South, as it is now, have no right to say one word on that subject; labor, in proportion to capital invested, yields a far handsomer revenue in the South than in any other part of the Union. From statistical tables now before me, contained in Hunt's *Merchant's Magazine*, it is shown, that while the average return from labor in the New England States is about $4, in Mississippi it is 1·69, twice as much as the average of New England, and greater than in any State of the Union except Louisiana, whose commercial facilities through New Orleans bring it slightly above the estimate for Mississippi. *We*, then, are the real monopolists, if monopoly exist anywhere. We produce a staple that Nature has said shall not grow north of our latitude, and it yields us double what our manufacturing brethren obtain. We should be for ever silenced on that subject, then.

But, it is said, the effect of a protective tariff is to ruin our commerce; I have incidentally shown already it will have a contrary effect. At the worst, it would change the character, not the extent, of our commerce. Perhaps we might not send so many ships abroad, our intercourse with foreign nations, when we become independent of them in our productions, might not be so great. There would be no need of it. We will have all the heart can wish, all the patriot could desire, of our own production, the growth or manufacture of our own land. But, as I have already remarked, let our internal resources be developed, and with some 4,000 miles of coast, with half a dozen Mediterraneans as large as that which divides Europe from Africa, with our mighty rivers, that at once fertilize and open channels of intercourse and access through the whole land, we have ample verge and scope enough for all our vessels. We might turn one-half of our forests into ships, one-half our population into sailors, whiten our coasts, lakes, and seas with sails, and yet not give entire development to our commercial resources. But I cannot now press this subject further.

He who could succeed in establishing free trade as the policy of this country, or in overthrowing the tariff system, and destroying our American manufactures, would be entitled to receive from the English Government the highest pension in

their gift. If their constitution and laws permitted it, there is no dukedom or earlship to which Sir Robert Peel might not justly elevate him. Yes, fellow-citizens, if the orators of the Democratic party could persuade us, by their plausible sophistries, that free trade is the true policy of this country, England would rejoice to her very core. I bid you, then, Democrats and Whigs, beware of their arguments and of their arts. Think not because the liquid in the cup seems fair and pure that it is wholesome drink. Even if they tell you it is the red and bubbling wine, dash it down; there is poison in it, and all the more deadly from the tempting guise it wears.

And here, before I close, let me touch upon another view of this great question, in which the South is most deeply interested. Those among us who are opposed to the protection of American manufactures, know that the result is decidedly beneficial to England, to Germany, and to France—but more especially to England, who is by far the largest consumer of our cotton. And yet who more awake than these Southern anti-tariff politicians to the interference of England on the subject of the Annexation of Texas? It is strange they are not equally alive to danger here. Do they think that England, who at an enormous sacrifice abolished her own system of servitude, who has passed prohibitory laws against the introduction into her territory of slave-made sugar, and who has, through her ministers and parliament, almost taken oath that she will not rest from her labors till slavery ceases to exist—do they think that England, so determined, so powerful, and with such resources, will take of you your slave-grown cotton any longer than she is obliged to do so? She cannot now do without it: but do you not know that she has nearly turned the world upside down in her efforts to raise cotton by a system of free labor? And when you reflect how broad a belt of land encircles the earth in which cotton will grow and thrive, and that but a few years ago hardly a bale was grown in the United States, is there such entire certainty that she may not ultimately succeed? Shall we, then, be dependent upon England for our market, or upon ourselves? Shall we, in the matter of slavery, find her, or the North, our best friend? For myself, I would rather look at home than abroad. Our Northern brethren, however opposed they are to slavery—fanatics though some of them may be on the subject—have yet sworn, both Whigs and Democrats, to maintain faithfully the Constitution of the country, by which slavery is protected—that Constitution which is at once our surety and our shield. I would rather trust our Northern brethren, whose forefathers and ours fought the battles of the Revolution side by side, while their mothers and our own together wrung their hands over the desolations of the country, or bound up the wounds of the injured, or administered consolation to the dying—I would rather trust the sons of our conjoint sires, from whose wisdom we have derived our noble constitution of Government, and in which they feel a pride equal to our own. In the North, too, many of us have mothers, sisters, and brothers, who love us and regard us as part of themselves; I would rather trust them. * * * * *

There is one more subject upon which I had designed to say a few words. I refer to the Annexation of Texas; but time forbids—(cries of "Go on," "Go on.") The evening is now far advanced, and most of you, especially the ladies, are, doubtless, weary. On some future occasion, I will discuss the subject referred to before either of the associations in the city. I returned you my thanks for the patient and considerate attention you have paid me, during my long address, and I only regret you have not been more fully compensated.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Decision of the Supreme Court of the U. S. involving his Title to the Vicksburg Commons—Letters—Removal to New Orleans—Public Dinners tendered him on leaving Mississippi—His Settlement in New Orleans—Withdrawal from Parties and Devotion to his Profession—His Legal Career—Anecdotes—Trial of Phelps, the Robber—His Character and Attainments as a Lawyer and Advocate.

ÆT. 36. 1845.

THE year 1845 was a very eventful one to Mr. Prentiss. In January a suit involving his title to the Vicksburg "Commons," and which had been several years pending in the Supreme Court of the United States, was decided against him. Thus, at a single blow, the pecuniary rewards of his professional life were snatched from him, and he was left worse than penniless. All the rest of his days he was heavily embarrassed by old debts—"floundering," to use his own expression, "like a fish in a net." He had built extensively on his Commons property, expending in a block of stores, a large hotel, and other improvements, according to the estimate of Mr. Smedes, not less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars; all this passed out of his possession by the above decision. In communicating to him this judgment, under date of Washington City, July 19th, his friend, Mr. Crittenden, writes:

I was really so cast down and overwhelmed by the decision of the Supreme Court, on the day before yesterday, in your Vicksburg case, that I had no heart to inform you of the result. And but for the necessity of the case, I would not now say a word on

the subject. The Court (the Chief Justice and McKinley dissenting) has decided that the daughters of the testator, Vick, have an equal interest with the sons in the two acre tract of land reserved, or designated, in the will, as the site of the town. The decree below is reversed, the demurrer overruled, and the cause remanded for further proceedings.

Such a thing, I believe, has never been granted, but my determination now is to apply for a re-hearing. You may expect soon to hear from me again. I am in no mood to write more at present.*

He thus refers to this decision in a letter to his elder brother :

I sympathize with you most sincerely in your difficulties, and would gladly aid you in any manner in my power. I fear, however, that my name would be of little service : for I do not now consider myself as solvent. In fact, I am entirely used up, and do not expect my property to liquidate my debts. There has been, recently, a decision in the Supreme Court of the United States, which has thrown the whole town of Vicksburg (all my property included) into litigation. I do not fear the final result ; but it will take a long time to bring the suit to a conclusion, and in the meanwhile no one will buy, or take in payment, property so situated. The consequence has been, that the largest portion of my property, including the hotel, has been sacrificed, under execution, for comparatively nothing. I hope still to be able to work out even, if I can realize some debts due me. In deed, I shall be very well satisfied to begin the world anew, provided I can begin free from my old debts. I suppose you are aware I am going to remove to New Orleans in the autumn. I have made all my arrangements for that purpose, and have the utmost confidence in my professional success.

A few extracts from his correspondence, will show that

* The decision will be found in Howard's *Rep. of Sup. Court of U. S.*, vol. iii., p. 464. It was ruled by four judges ; Mr. Justice Story being absent, and Judge Nelson not having yet taken his seat on the bench.—Ed.

this misfortune had no power to dampen his courage. He recommenced the battle of life with as much confidence as he first entered it. Never were his letters more hopeful; never did they overflow with kindlier or more joyous affections.

TO HIS MOTHER.

BELMONT, *Jan.* 19, 1845.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

On New Year's day, I was on a steamboat all day, with Mary and the children, coming up from Natchez, where they had all been on a visit. We did not get home till the next morning, and then I had to go out to Jackson to attend court, where I have been detained ever since. Thus I missed the opportunity of writing you on New Year's day, as has been my custom, and as I wished to do; but both Mary and I thought much of you, and all the dear ones around you; we talked of you, and from the bottom of our hearts wished you a "happy New Year." Nor did little Jeanie forget her "*damma Prentiss*" (as she calls it). She loves you as much as she does her mother or me, and every day pays her respects to your portrait, and tells all strangers who it is. I would not write from Jackson, for I preferred writing my New Year's letter from home, with the dear ones around me, and joining in affectionate regard. I came home yesterday and found them all well and happy, and right glad to see me; and that made me happy too; and as I look at them, I think of another beloved family, not less dear, but far, far distant; each one of whom I wish may ever be as joyful as I am this Sunday night, with my wife and children smiling beside me.

And how has the last year gone with you, my dearest mother? I trust it has dealt kindly with your health, and pressed lightly upon your dear head. It surely has not been barren of interesting events, and our little family circle can make up quite a chronicle from its records. Let us see: brother G. has entered upon his high calling, and is now a teacher of good. Three grandsons have been born, to grow up and call you blessed.

And were it not for the illness of dear Abby, the past year would be one of pleasant remembrances; but I trust that cause of sorrow will be removed, and her health fully restored. The next winter she must come and spend with us; we were greatly disappointed in not having her the present. How does Anna bear her maternal honors? I have no doubt she will do finely; there is nothing like practice in such matters. I expect Master Seargent Prentiss S. is a very fine boy, and will make a good and great man, and add much honor to the name his mother so kindly gave him. My own little George Lewis is as fine a fellow as you would see in a week's travel. His mother thinks she sees in him already an incipient minister, though certainly it is not from his *gravity* she judges, for he laughs and crows continually. He is, however, very good, and seldom cries. And now, my dearest mother, good-bye. Mary joins me in love to all, and in prayer that your days may be prolonged until our little boy shall become a man, and feel as proud in being your grandson as I do in being

Your affectionate and devoted son,

SEARGENT.

Here is an extract from a letter to his younger sister, written shortly before:

We are overjoyed by receipt of Mr. S.'s letter, announcing the arrival of the little stranger. I congratulate you, my dear sister, from the bottom of my heart, upon your safe passage through this terrible strait, and for this great addition to your sources of happiness. I cannot conceive a greater blessing to a young wife than the birth of a fine, healthy child. Now the whole circle of your duties and enjoyments is complete. I pity those who have no children, They know nothing of the best objects of human existence and exertion. And so you have fastened to him my ugly name. I feel much flattered at this mark of your affection, and trust that it will not prove a name of evil omen. Perhaps he will make it distinguished, and rescue it from the oblivion to which it seemed destined. Dear little fellow, I would give anything to see him. So soon as you

are able to write you must give us a full and complete account of him—the color of his eyes, hair, whom he looks like, whether he is good-natured, or cross, after the manner of his namesake. Give him his uncle's kiss and blessing.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

Vicksburg, *Jan.* 22, 1845.

Dear George:—

I am several letters in arrear to you, for which I know your good nature would excuse me, if you knew how much I have been engaged for the last six weeks or two months. We got your letter of the 7th on yesterday, and were delighted to hear you have received a call at New Bedford. It seems to me to be a very flattering one, and the salary quite tolerable for New England. I know nothing of the place, except that it is a *whaling* one, and one in which the good people let their *lights* shine, and do not hide them under a bushel. I presume you have decided the matter long before this. At all events, I congratulate you, my dear brother, upon the favorable prospects with which you are entering upon your profession. I consider your success assured, both in a worldy as well as a religious point of view. If you settle at New Bedford, I shall be delighted to come and see you, and teach some of *those trout*, what you will teach your parishioners, the evils of giving way to the bait of the tempter. I am very busy in trying to wind up my affairs, preparatory to my removal to New Orleans. I succeed, however, but slowly, and fear I shall have to go with incumbrances upon my shoulders. My property seems to be useless in the payment of debts, and as I have no lamp of Aladdin, some of my debts will have to wait a little my convenience. However, I have no fear of my success in New Orleans. I am determined to go next fall, at any sacrifice of my affairs here. I consider this State as disgraced and degraded, and I have sworn that I will not bring up my children within reach of its infamous doctrines. We are all in excellent health. Mary works in the gar-

den every day, and Jeanie helps her, with more zeal than knowledge. Your namesake increases rapidly in grace and stature, and already looks, at least in his mother's estimation, like a young parson. My own health has improved. It has not been better for two years. We shall look with impatience for your next letter.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO THE SAME.

VICKSBURG, *March* 7, 1845.

DEAR GEORGE:—

Mary wrote two or three days since, but as we are all going down to Natchez to-day, I will also drop a line. We are going to Longwood, and shall make a visit of eight or ten days. Mary and the children are in excellent health; indeed, I never saw such strong and healthy children in my life. Master George is a perfect little Hercules, and I have no doubt, will achieve as many labors as that worthy ever did. Their minds, too, seem to expand as rapidly as their bodies, and Jeanie already requires a regular system of education. We are delighted at your acceptance of the call to New Bedford. The place of itself must be pleasant, and I fancy, too, the good people of New Bedford are very agreeable folks, open-hearted, and generous: they smack of the ocean. I shall not forget, when I come to see you, to examine into those fishing privileges, to which you allude; especially the *trout stream*, which, however, I fear will hardly bear comparison with the famous old "Great Brook," the most classic stream, in my opinion, in North America.

April, 21.

* * * * I suppose you are now at N. Bedford, setting your house in order. How I should love to drop in upon you, and laugh at the inexperience of two such beginners, enlightening you perhaps the while, with the result of my own experience in the deep mysteries of housekeeping.

I wish much you were near enough to pay us a bridal visit. Belmont is now the very place for passing a honeymoon. Millions of flowers are breaking the very backs of the breezes with heavy loads of fragrance; thousands of birds are singing love to each other, and building nests under our very noses, and last, but not least, Jeanie is continually flying about like a butterfly among the flowers, while "gentle Geordie" crows in imitation, or defiance of every bird's note he hears. Oh! we should be so happy if you were with us. We are waiting anxiously for a full account of the wedding, and hope in a week to hear from you. Mary and the children are well. I am busy studying Civil Law, and preparing myself for New Orleans. I have met with much difficulty and annoyance, in closing up my business here, and do not expect to save anything from the wreck. Indeed, I shall be satisfied to get out of the State as rich as I got into it. I only regret I did not go to New Orleans three or four years ago. Vicksburg is becoming every day more distasteful to me, and were it not for Belmont, I would not stay here this summer. Again, my dear brother, God bless you and dear sister L., and make your union as happy, as anticipation has ever painted it.

Very affectionately your brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

VICKSBURG, *Sept.* 26, 1845.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I start to-day for New Orleans to make my final arrangements for removing. From New Orleans I shall go up to Alexandria, which is on Red River, in Louisiana, to attend the Supreme Court. I expect to get back here about the middle of October. We shall then pack up immediately and be off. Mary, with the children and her mother, go down with me as far as Natchez, where they will stay till I return. I shall be right glad when the moving is all over, I assure you, and we get once more comfortably settled. I am delighted with the move,

and only regret that I did not make it six or eight years ago. My prospects in New Orleans are excellent, and all my friends encourage me in the belief that I shall do better there, in my profession, than I have ever done in Mississippi. I go under great advantages. I am as well known there as I am here, and have in the city a great many warm friends. Indeed, I have no fear whatever of the result. We have been expecting a letter from Abby with great anxiety, but have not received one for several weeks. I am anxious for her to get here before we leave Belmont, and regret exceedingly that I could not go on for her. My business here, however, has been such, in winding up my affairs, that it was impossible for me to leave. I hope Abby has found some of our friends whom she could accompany, and is already on the way. As soon as I return from Alexandria, if necessary, I will come up to Cincinnati or Pittsburg, and meet her. Mary and the little ones are dying to see her. Jeanie talks a great deal about Aunt Abby, and we are all truly delighted at the prospect of having her with us all winter. I am certain she will pass a pleasant winter, and return, I trust, with her health fully restored. We would give anything in the world if you were coming too. The family all join me in love and kind remembrances. Remember me to all our friends, and believe me, ever and truly, my dearest mother,

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

TO THE SAME.

NEW ORLEANS, *Nov.* 10, 1845.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

We have been in New Orleans a week, and are now fairly settled down in our own house, and begin to feel as if we were at home. We have a very comfortable house, in a delightful situation, and are all quite pleased with our move. We had to stay two or three days at the hotel; but we all went to work immediately, putting up furniture, and laying down carpets. You would have laughed to see me sitting on the floor,

and sewing away at the carpets, with Mary and Abby. A. was of great service, and did as much or more than any of us; so you may judge how her health has improved. You can't tell how delighted we are to have her with us. The children are already as fond of her as they are of me, and "Aunt Abby" seems so necessary a part of the family that I don't see how we shall be able to part with her next spring. But the best of all is, her health has improved so wonderfully that you would hardly know her. She has scarcely any cough, and walks a mile or two through the city without fatigue. She says she can hardly realize the rapid and favorable change. Indeed, she improved all the way on her route, notwithstanding the fatigue and exposure of travelling. Now that we are settled down, and she can get a little rest, she will improve still more rapidly. The only regret I feel about her being here is, that you are left so lonely. If you were only with us, my dear mother, how happy we should all be. But you must make Anna come and pay you some long visits during the winter. The children have both been sick. We thought, at first, they had the scarlet fever. Geordie has entirely recovered, and is now heartier, if possible, than ever. Jeanie has had a cold, and is still suffering from the attack, but I think she will get over it in a few days. Abby is going to send you a letter to-day, so I will stop. All join in love and kind remembrances.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

It was not until after mature deliberation that he decided to select New Orleans as his future home. During the winter of 1843-4, around his fireside, the subject was often talked of, and the advantages of different cities canvassed. New York and Baltimore were the principal competitors with New Orleans; but many considerations, professional and domestic, seemed to point to the Crescent City, notwithstanding his going there would involve the vast labor of mastering, and the peculiar difficulty of practising, an entirely new system of law. "It was," to borrow the language of one

of his most accomplished and admiring friends, "it was a hazardous undertaking; many well-earned reputations had been wrecked in this great city. A new system of law had to be mastered; it was not like moving from one common law State to another; but it was passing into a jurisdiction where the laws of Rome held sway, and the imperial sceptre still had power."*

His determination to leave Mississippi excited deep regret throughout the State, and on the eve of his departure, his old friends and neighbors at Vicksburg, "anxious to testify their regard for him personally, and to seal that friendship which, through many years, had known no change, except continual increase, earnestly requested him to partake with them of a Social Dinner."

More than a year before, he had received the following communication from Natchez:

NATCHEZ, *July* 15, 1844.

To HON. S. S. PRENTISS.

SIR:—The undersigned, having heard, with deep regret, of your determination to withdraw from this State, which you have so long adorned by the splendor of your eloquence, and seek a residence in some more propitious soil, undefiled by the foul heresy of Repudiation, cannot permit you to depart without such a manifestation of their feelings as will most strongly evince their high personal regard, and their profound admiration of those distinguished abilities which have so often, and with such signal success, been exerted in behalf of the great principles for which we are all contending.

Usage indicates one of sundry modes by which a community may do honor to an eminent citizen, whose brilliant career has illustrated their country; and that mode the undersigned will

* J. W. Frost, Esq. He has since fallen a victim to duelling. He was for some time editor of the *N. O. Crescent*, and a gentleman of fine social and literary culture. He was a native of Maine. His death was one of the saddest fruits that the murderous custom which caused it has ever brought forth, even in the Southwest.

adopt by asking you to partake of a Public Dinner, on a day most convenient to yourself, which we pray you will designate.

This very flattering invitation was signed by a large number of the most prominent citizens of Adams county. Appended to it were such names as James C. Wilkins, Stephen Duncan, George Winchester, Adam L. Bingaman, and many others, not unknown throughout the Union.

In a letter, dated Natchez, September 15th, 1845, the invitation is thus renewed :

Your friends here, anxious to testify their warm personal regard, as well as to evince their admiration for those great abilities, which you have so conspicuously and so efficaciously exerted, in the effort to strangle the monster Repudiation, and at the same time, to arrest the political perversity, which, in its overwhelming course, threatens to demolish all moral and constitutional restraint, ask you to partake with them a Public Dinner, to be given in the city of Natchez, on a day to be fixed by you, prior to your departure.

He had been in New Orleans but a few weeks, when he writes : "I have already considerable business, although it has not yet ripened into fees. My friends predict for me much greater success than I choose to believe in ; but, at all events, I am glad that I am out of Mississippi, and only regret that I did not come here ten years ago. I shall quit politics entirely, and devote myself to my profession."

His removal to Louisiana was regarded by his friends throughout the country with great interest, and most hearty good wishes, not without friendly counsels, followed him thither. "And now that you are fairly settled in New Orleans," Mr. Crittenden writes to him early in 1846, "you are to be regarded as a *man of business*, I suppose, devoted to your causes and your briefs. I hope that it may

be so, and that all the temptations of New Orleans may have no power over you. You have a noble career before you there; if you but run it with all diligence and industry."

Another old friend, whose opinion of his abilities was only exceeded by personal regard for him, writes thus:

I cannot express to you how much I rejoice in your final establishment at New Orleans, and in the flattering prospects of your success there. I am delighted, too, with your motto. You will not think me impertinent if I add that justice equally to yourself, your position, and your profession, seems to demand that, for the next ten years, if God spares your life, you should be a *scholar* as well as a lawyer. Of course, I use the word in the most comprehensive sense, as including the studies which form the philosophic jurist and statesman, not less than those which form the man of taste and intellectual accomplishments. Daniel Webster, I am told, amid the heaviest pressure of official and professional engagements, has always been in the habit of devoting a portion of his time to the reading of the ancient and modern classics; especially to a frequent perusal and reperusal of such authors as Lord Bacon, Hooker, and Burke. And he is, doubtless, quite as much indebted to the profound wisdom he has imbibed from these kingly intellects, as to his own massive genius, for his fame as a lawyer and statesman. With your vast fund of experience already treasured up—the best and readiest interpreter of all book-knowledge—and with your unrivalled gifts, I really do not see what is to prevent your becoming, if you will, the deepest, the ablest, as well as the *smartest*, lawyer in the land. May God bless you!

During the next two years Mr. Prentiss devoted himself with unwearied assiduity to the labors of his profession, and especially to a thorough mastery of the Civil Law. He took no part in political affairs, and seemed wholly absorbed in the care of his family, in extricating himself from his pecu-

niary embarrassments, and laying the foundations of an honorable legal career in the Southwestern metropolis. Removed from the scene of former party contests, and no longer harassed by the spectre of Repudiation, his political feelings were greatly softened ; he came to look upon Democrats with a more charitable eye, and though steadfast in his old principles, he was less and less disposed to consider the Whig party as immaculate, or the opposite party as wholly corrupt. His removal to Louisiana had a very happy effect, too, in enlarging the sphere of his social and literary intercourse, and also in creating, or renewing, many friendly, genial ties and kindly associations with New England. No small portion of the eminent merchants and professional men of New Orleans, like himself, were from the North, and still bound to it by a thousand tender recollections, as well as by the sacred affections of family and kindred.

And here it may not be out of place to dwell a little upon his character and attainments as a lawyer. It is matter of deep regret that the records of his legal career are so meagre and unsatisfactory. An accurate report of his principal speeches in the Federal and State Courts of Mississippi and Louisiana, would be a very valuable contribution to the forensic eloquence and literature of the country. Some of the criminal cases in which he was engaged were full of wild, romantic interest, and afforded a fine opportunity for the exercise of his varied gifts. His civil practice, too, embraced several suits, which were among the heaviest of a private nature ever tried before an American tribunal. But not a single case, that I am aware of, was ever fully reported. The only relic of his forensic oratory is his address at the Wilkinson Trial. The published portion of his speech on the Mississippi Contested Election, however, may be considered as a pretty fair specimen of his legal

acumen and dialectic skill. But he has left nothing behind him which completely exhibits what his admirers regarded as the peculiar excellence of his best efforts at the bar—the singular combination of logical power and clearness with intense passion, wit, learning, pathos, and a vivid, all-informing imagination.

The remainder of this chapter will aim to depict him as a lawyer, in as faithful colors as the scanty materials permit.

At the bar (Mr. Smedes writes), your brother was essentially in his element. He rejoiced in the keen encounter of wits, the excited logical contests, the rapid shifting of scenes in the drama of the trial, the conflict of mind with mind in all the varied forms in which it occurs in the *Nisi Prius* Courts. In this field of legal strife, where the readiness in the use of the weapon, and its sharpness and weight, are the surest guarantees of success, he stood proudly eminent. One who never heard him at the bar and before a jury, could form no idea of the powers and resources of his intellect. No turn in his case, no adduction of proof adverse, no unfortunate *dénoûment* on his own side, ever discomposed him; they only stimulated him to renewed effort; he rose with the emergency, and always greater than it. His readiness and self-possession were, indeed, wonderful, and *never left him*. He was once defending an action of ejectment in the Circuit Court of Washington County, for a tract of land. Mr. N. D. Coleman, the counsel for the plaintiff, had disclosed his case to the jury, when "Old Belcher," as he is called, a famous hunter, living in the swamps of Deer Creek, who happened to be on the jury, cried out, "*That's a good title; I go for plaintiff.*" Your brother, with his fine smile lighting up his face, says, "Wait a minute, Belcher; wait till you have heard my side." "Well," said Belcher, falling back, "I'll wait." Mr. Prentiss finished his proof, and, turning to Belcher, says, "What do you think of that?" "*That's a good title, too*," says Belcher; "*I'll go with the majority!*"

In 1837, when he thought his fortune made, he retired from

the practice, and very rarely came to the Court House. In the winter of 1838–9, when Judge Guion and myself were practising law together, we had a case of *slander* for the defence. It was the first suit of the kind I had ever known brought in the Court, and the only one, to my knowledge, ever brought in it. People here settle their slander suits in another court. George S. Yerger, Esq., one of the first lawyers in the State, was on the other side, and Judge Guion was absent. I felt unequal to the task of defending the suit alone, and when I found the presiding judge would not lay it over, I wrote your brother a note, telling him how I was situated: that Mr. Yerger had that morning been specially retained on the other side, and asking him to come up and help me. He had never heard of the case before; but, with that kindliness with which he then overflowed, and which, had he possessed the mines of Peru, would have, in the end, left his pocket-book empty, he came at once to my aid. When he reached the court-room, the jury were empanelled, and a witness on the stand. It was a cold day, in the month of December; the plaintiff was present in court, clad in a white linsey (woollen) jacket; the defendant was present also. The case was "R. Jones *v.* Wm. C. Doss;" it afterwards went to the High Court, and is reported in 3 *How. Miss. Rep.* under the style of "Doss *v.* Jones;" but it went up on law points alone. The proof was simple of the speaking of the slanderous words—to wit, "that the plaintiff was a thief, and had stolen a flitch of bacon; and that the plaintiff owned some land and some negroes." This was the whole case, and on this slight foundation your brother built an argument of wit, sarcasm, ridicule, and eloquent declamation, that I believe even he never surpassed. The man who brought the suit, although it was one of our coldest winter days, sweat until his white woollen coat looked as if it had been dipped in the river. Our client, after the trial was ended, declared that he never paid five hundred dollars more willingly, that being the sum into which the jury mulcted him. You will, perhaps, wonderingly ask, how could any man make a brilliant speech, irresistibly comic, terrible in denunciation, and eloquent in thought and word, on such a topic? In endeavoring to recall

the outline of it, I find myself incapable of doing him anything like justice, and shall not make the attempt. But I recollect well the picture he drew of the class of men who bring slander suits; cowards, who dare not vindicate themselves; characterless, and who seek at the hands of a jury what by a life of honest industry, had they led it, they might have built up for themselves; men of an evil eye, and who look covetously on their neighbors' negroes. His account, too, of what constitutes reputation and character; the traits of the true man of honor; his delineation of the high-toned gentleman—these, and other salient points of the speech, I shall never forget.

Mr. Prentiss was exceedingly scrupulous in caring for and vindicating the rights of his clients. But he was not less regardful of his own, and maintained them, as against his clients, with equal determination. On the trial of the case of Owen P. C—— against Redding B. Herring, involving an amount of about twenty-five hundred dollars, and in which the plaintiff's right to recover anything was very doubtful, Mr. C. was present, and while your brother was examining a witness, came forward, and, without speaking to Mr. P., or indicating his intention to him, addressed a question to the witness as to some fact pertaining to the case. Your brother rose, and looking at his client, said, "Mr. Owen P. C——, am I managing this case, or are you? If you are, sir, I will abandon it at once. If I am, allow me to continue it without your interference." The look and manner in which this was said, in the hearing of the whole court and jury, were overwhelming; Mr. C—— shrunk back with an apology, and was as mute as a mouse the rest of the trial, which resulted in a large verdict for him, on what I thought, most questionable grounds. But it was next to impossible for a jury to resist your brother at that day (1837); he would argue with them, joke with them, drive them by his indignant and withering denunciations, or lead them captive with his eloquence. Those he was severest upon were always the most eager to get his services on their side when they again became involved in litigation.

The following passages from an article * in the *United States Law Magazine* for May, 1852, appear to me to indicate, with much discrimination, the main elements of his legal character :

I come now to speak of him as a lawyer.

He was more widely known as a politician than a lawyer, as an advocate than a jurist. This was because politics form a wider and more conspicuous theatre than the bar, and because the mass of men are better judges of oratory than of law. That he was a man of wonderful versatility and varied accomplishments, is most true; that he was a popular orator of the first class, is also true; and that all of his faculties did not often, if ever, find employment in his profession, may be true likewise. So far he appeared to better advantage in a deliberative assembly or before the people, that there he had a wider range, and subjects of a more general interest, and was not fettered by rules and precedents; his genius expanded over a larger area, and exercised his powers in greater variety and number. Moreover, a stump speech is rarely made chiefly for conviction and persuasion, but to gratify and delight the auditors, and to raise the character of the speaker. Imagery, anecdote, ornament, eloquence and elocution, are in better taste than in a speech at the bar, where the chief and only legitimate aim is to convince and instruct.

It will always be a mooted point among PRENTISS's admirers as to where his strength really lay. My own opinion is that it was as a jurist that he mostly excelled; that it consisted in *knowing and being able to show to others what was the law.* I state

* It was written by J. G. Baldwin, Esq., now of San Francisco, and has since been reprinted in *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*. The whole sketch is very spirited, though inaccurate in several particulars, and based chiefly upon a knowledge of Mr. *Prentiss* during the "flush times" of 1836–8. It is marked by such an admiring and friendly temper, that, had the author's acquaintance with Mr. P. been longer and more intimate, some expressions in it, I cannot doubt, would have been considerably modified, while others would have been entirely spared.

the opinion with some diffidence, and, did it rest on my own judgment alone, should not hazard it at all. But the eminent Chief-Justice of the High Court of Errors and Appeals of Mississippi, thought that PRENTISS appeared to most advantage before that Court; and a distinguished judge of the Supreme Court of Alabama, who had heard him before the Chancellor of Mississippi, expressed to me the opinion that his talents shone most conspicuously in that forum. These were men who could be misled from a fair judgment of a legal argument by mere oratory, about as readily as old Playfair could have been turned from a true criticism upon a mathematical treatise, by its being burnished over with extracts from Fourth-of-July harangues. Had brilliant declamation been his only or chief faculty, there were plenty of his competitors at the bar, who, by their learning and powers of argument, would have knocked the spangles off from him, and sent his cases whirling out of court, to the astonishment of hapless clients who had trusted to such fragile help in times of *trial*.

As an advocate, Mr. PRENTISS attained a wider celebrity than as a jurist. Indeed, he was more formidable in this than in any other department of his profession. Before the Supreme, or Chancery, or Circuit Court, upon the law of the case, inferior abilities might set off, against greater native powers, superior application and research; or the precedents might overpower him; or the learning and judgment of the bench might come in aid of the right, even when more feebly defended than assailed. But what protection had mediocrity, or even second-rate talent, against the influences of excitement and fascination, let loose before a mercurial jury, at least as easily impressed through their passions as their reason? The boldness of his attacks, his iron nerve, his adroitness, his power of debate, the overpowering fire (broadside after broadside) which he poured into the assailable points of his adversary, his facility and plainness of illustration, and his talent of adapting himself to every mind and character he addressed, rendered him, on all debatable issues, next to irresistible. To give him the conclusion was nearly the same thing as to give him the verdict.

In the examination of witnesses he was thought particularly to excel. He wasted no time by irrelevant questions. He seemed to weigh every question before he put it, and see clearly its bearing upon every part of the case. The facts were brought out in natural and simple order. He examined as few witnesses, and elicited as few facts, as he could safely get along with. In this way he avoided the danger of discrepancy, and kept his mind undiverted from the turning propositions in the case. The jury were left unwearied and unconfused, and saw, before the argument, the bearing of the testimony.

He avoided, too, the miserable error into which so many lawyers fall, of making every possible point in a case, and pressing all with equal force and confidence, thereby prejudicing the mind of the court, and making the jury believe that the trial of a cause is but running a jockey race.

He chose rather to reserve in his own favor even doubtful points, when he believed he could get along without serious danger, thus securing the case against reversal if he gained it, and securing the chance of reversal if he lost it.

In arguing a cause of much public interest, he got all the benefit of the sympathy and feeling of the bystanders. He would sometimes turn towards them in an impassioned appeal, as if looking for a larger audience than court and jury; and the excitement of the outsiders, especially in criminal cases, was thrown with great effect into the jury-box.

Mr. Prentiss was never thrown off his guard, or seemingly taken by surprise. He kept his temper; or, if he got furious, there was "method in his madness."

He had a faculty in speaking I never knew possessed by any other person. He seemed to speak without any effort of the will. There seemed to be no governing or guiding power to the particular faculty called into exercise. It worked on, and its treasures flowed spontaneously. There was no air of thought—no elevation, frowning, or knitting of the brows—no fixing up of the countenance—no pauses to collect or arrange his thoughts. All seemed natural and unpremeditated. No one ever felt uneasy lest he might fall; in his most brilliant flights, "the

empyrean heights" into which he soared seemed to be his natural element—as the upper air the eagle's.

Among the most powerful of his jury efforts, were his speeches against Bird for the murder of Cameron; and against Phelps, the notorious highway-robber and murderer. Both were convicted. The former owed his conviction, as General Foote, who defended him with great zeal and ability, thought, to the transcendent eloquence of PRENTISS. He was justly convicted, however, as his confession, afterwards made, proved. Phelps was one of the most daring and desperate of ruffians. He fronted his prosecutor and the court, not only with composure, but with scornful and malignant defiance. When PRENTISS rose to speak, and for some time afterwards, the criminal scowled upon him a look of hate and insolence. But when the orator, kindling with his subject, turned upon him, and poured down a stream of burning invective, like lava, upon him; when he depicted the villainy and barbarity of his bloody atrocities; when he pictured, in dark and dismal colors, the fate which awaited him, and the awful judgment to be pronounced at another bar, upon his crimes, when he should be confronted with his innocent victims; when he fixed his gaze of concentrated power upon him, the strong man's face relaxed; his eyes faltered and fell; until, at length, unable to bear up longer, half-convicted, he hid his head beneath the bar, and exhibited a picture of ruffian-audacity cowed beneath the spell of true courage and triumphant genius. Though convicted, he was not hung. He broke jail, and resisted re-capture so desperately, that, although he was incumbered with his fetters, his pursuers had to kill him in self-defence, or permit his escape.*

* The cases of Bird and Phelps occurred in the earlier part of Mr. PRENTISS' legal career, and were, I believe, the only ones involving life, in which he ever appeared as prosecutor. He probably did it, in the present instances, in obedience to a strong feeling pervading the mind of the community that the defendants were guilty, and that, in the case of Phelps especially, conviction was of vital importance to the public safety. In later years he refused to appear as prosecutor in capital cases, and often expressed himself very decidedly against the practice.

A report of Phelps' trial was published at the time by Gen. Foote; but I have not been able to obtain a copy. He was tried for shooting a man in cold blood, in the vicinity of Vicksburg. It was early in the morning, and the man was in the act of

Mr. P. was employed only in important cases, and generally as associate counsel, and was thereby relieved of much of the preliminary preparation which occupies so much of the time of the attorney in getting a case ripe for trial. In the Supreme and Chancery Courts he had, of course, only to examine the record and prepare his argument. On the circuit, his labors were much more arduous. The important criminal and civil causes which he argued, necessarily required consultations with clients, the preparation of pleadings and proofs, either under his supervision, or by his advice and direction; and this, from the number and difficulty of the cases, must have consumed time and required application and industry.

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lifting his little boy on horseback, when Phelps, who had concealed himself near by, took deliberate aim and killed him. The wadding of the ball was recovered. A torn fly-leaf—part of an old song, if I remember rightly—was also found in the murderer's pocket. On being compared, these two pieces of paper *exactly matched*. Upon this circumstantial evidence his conviction chiefly turned. Such is the version of the story, as I have heard it.

Mr. PRENTISS once gave me a most interesting account of this vulgar Rob Roy of the Southwest, as he called him. Phelps (whether that was his real name I do not know) was a model of physical symmetry. His shoulders, arms, and hands are said to have been perfect. His strength was Herculean. He might have sat, indeed, for the statue of a Grecian athlete, or a Roman gladiator. Shortly after his conviction, he sent for Mr. PRENTISS, begging him to come to the prison. Mr. P. did so. In the course of the interview, Phelps told him that he had formed the purpose of escaping during the progress of the trial. His plan was twofold; first, to leap upon his prosecutor—who, aside from his lameness, had the look of a mere boy—kill him, and then, amidst the confusion, secure his own flight. He was, probably, deterred from attempting to execute this fine scheme by reading in the eye and bearing of the youthful orator unmistakable signs, that such an attempt would prove an ignominious failure. When he had disclosed his plan, Mr. PRENTISS quietly remarked, "I saw it all; but I was prepared for you."

After the trial, the ruffian's murderous purpose towards his prosecutor changed into a feeling of strange confidence and respect. His main object, apparently, in soliciting the interview, was to unbosom himself, by making known the particulars of his private history. And there, in that lonely dungeon, feelings gushed forth from his robber-heart, of whose existence, probably, no one had dreamed before. The memory of his boyhood seemed to revive; and with it a thousand tender and sacred recollections. He said that he had been born to a very different career. He was from New England, and his family still occupied a position there of the highest respectability. He had a pious mother, and had been trained to virtue and goodness. His last wish was that his relatives might never hear of his crimes or his infamous death.—ED.

His faculty of concentration drew his energies, as through a lens, upon the subject before him. No matter what he was engaged in, his intellect was in ceaseless play and motion. Alike comprehensive and systematic in the arrangement of his thoughts, he reproduced without difficulty what he had once conceived.

Probably something would have still been wanting to explain his celerity of preparation for his causes, had not partial nature gifted him with the lawyer's highest talent, the *acumen* which, like an instinct, enabled him to see the points which the record presented. His genius for generalizing saved him, in a moment, the labor of a long and tedious reflection upon, and collation of, the several parts of a narrative. He read with great rapidity; glancing his eyes through a page, he caught the substance of its contents at a view. His analysis, too, was wonderful. The chemist does not reduce the contents of his alembic to their elements more rapidly or surely than he resolved the most complicated facts into primary principles.

His statements—like those of all great lawyers—were clear, perspicuous, and compact; the language simple and sententious. Considered in the most technical sense, as forensic arguments merely, no one will deny that his speeches were admirable and able efforts. If the professional reader will turn to the meagre reports of his arguments in the cases of *Ross* v. *Vertner*, 5 How. 305; *Vick et al.* v. *The Mayor and Aldermen of Vicksburg*, 1 How. 381; and *The Planters' Bank* v. *Snodgrass et al.*, he will, I think, concur in this opinion.

Anecdotes are not wanting to show that even in the Supreme Court he argued some cases of great importance, without knowing anything about them till the argument was commenced. One of these savors of the ludicrous. Mr. Prentiss was retained, as associate counsel, with Mr. (now Gen.) M——, at that time one of the most promising, as now one of the most distinguished, lawyers in the State. During the session of the Supreme Court, at which the case was to come on, Mr. M—— called Mr. P.'s attention to the case, and proposed examining the record together; but for some reason this was deferred for some time. At last it was agreed to examine into the case the night before the

day set for the hearing. At the appointed time, PRENTISS could not be found. Mr. M—— was in great perplexity. The case was of great importance; there were able opposing counsel, and his client and himself had trusted greatly to Mr. P.'s assistance. PRENTISS appeared in the court-room when the case was called up. The junior counsel opened the case, reading slowly from the record all that was necessary to give a clear perception of its merits; and made the points, and read the authorities he had collected. The counsel on the other side replied. Mr. P. rose to rejoin. The junior could scarcely conceal his apprehensions. But there was no cloud on the brow of the speaker; the consciousness of his power and of approaching victory sat on his face. He commenced, as he always did, by stating clearly the case, and the questions raised by the facts. He proceeded to establish the propositions he contended for, by their reasons, by authorities, and by collateral analogies, and to illustrate them from his copious resources of comparison. He took up, one by one, the arguments on the other side, and showed their fallacy; he examined the authorities relied upon, in the order in which they were introduced, and showed their inapplicability, and the distinction between the facts of the cases reported, and those of the case at bar; then returning to the authorities of his colleague, he showed how clearly, in application and principle, they supported his own argument. When he sat down, his colleague declared that PRENTISS had taught him more of the case than he had gathered from his own researches and reflection.

His addresses at the bar, like those before the popular assembly, were hardly less distinguished by the felicity with which he wrought into them the sentiments and thoughts of others, than for the originality and beauty of his own. His poetical quotations were particularly apt, and, as he introduced them, produced, oftentimes, all the effect of a pointed argument. The following may serve as an instance:

Mr. PRENTISS was engaged in a case, involving the question of "*devisavit vel non*," that is, the validity of a will. A gentleman

of wealth, residing in Mississippi, had, when young, become deeply attached to a young lady who, like himself, was a native of Virginia, where both then resided. The affection was not reciprocated, and she married another. The disappointed lover emigrated to Mississippi, and became an inebriate, and after the lapse of some years, died—attesting, even in his last moments, and after a long separation, his undying affection for the object of his hopeless attachment, by bequeathing to her his whole estate. She had, in the meantime, become a widow, and was indigent. She accepted the bequest, but his relations contested it, alleging that intemperance had destroyed the mind of their deceased kinsman, and that he was, therefore, incapable of making a valid will. Here was a theme and occasion, which PRENTISS improved by a speech of unrivalled eloquence. But I will, as I intended, refer only to one portion of it, illustrative of that quality of his mind which I have been describing: his power of imparting to a sentiment new value and beauty, by his mode of applying it. He said, that at the approach of death, the mind often would cast off the clouds by which it had been long obscured, and the heart, however perverted by intemperance, would suddenly recover its former purity. So, doubtless, in the last moments of this unhappy man's life, a remembrance of his early love had shone across the dreary lapse of his after years, and the image of that first loved and never forgotten one, rising above all intermediate objects, had recalled the fond hopes of his youth; and that, under these vivid influences, he had striven to redeem the errors of his life, by an act of noble generosity. Thus dying,

> ——— "like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
> With a new color, as it gasps away,
> The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is grey."

The jury found a verdict against the heirs, and, of course, in favor of the legatee, who lives yet, I believe, to enjoy the fruits of the disinterested attachment which she had inspired, but never rewarded. On this occasion, as well as on the trial of the case involving the title to the Vicksburg "Commons," Mr. P.

was opposed by the celebrated Joseph Holt (since removed to Kentucky), who afterwards remarked to the writer, that "PRENTISS was the only man he ever met whose performance was equal to his reputation."

Mr. PRENTISS' success before juries cannot be more strikingly exemplified than by the following anecdote:

He was engaged in a cause pending in a Circuit Court east of Pearl River, where juries are usually composed of men who shape their verdict in their own language, leaving to the court the irksome task of moulding them into a legal form. On this occasion, the jury were so captivated with Mr. P.'s eloquence and humor, that they confounded *him* with the defendant, whom he represented, and brought in their verdict in these words—"We, the jury, finds for lawyer PRENTISS, and plaintiff to pay the costs,"—which of course unsettled the gravity of the court, bar, and audience, as it has done that of all who have heard it related since.*

In the administration of law in the interior counties and backwoods of the State, the comical element mingled very largely, and, unfortunately, not always in so harmless a way as this.†

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* Jno. M. Chilton, Esq.

† Mr. Baldwin, in giving his legal reminiscences, touches upon this subject in a very amusing style. A few passages deserve to be quoted, as throwing light upon certain phases of Southwestern jurisprudence twenty years ago.

"Those were jolly times. Imagine thirty or forty young men collected together in a new country, armed with fresh licenses which they had got gratuitously, and a plentiful stock of brass which they had got in the natural way; and standing ready to supply any distressed citizen who wanted law, with their wares counterfeiting the article. I must confess it looked something like a swindle. It was doing business on the wooden nutmeg, or rather the patent brass-clock principle. There was one consolation: the clients were generally as sham as the counsellors. For the most part, they were either broke or in a rapid decline. They usually paid us the compliment of retaining us, but they usually retained the fee too, a double retainer we did not much fancy. However, we got as much as we were entitled to and something over, *videlicet*, as much over as we got at all. The most that we made was experience. We learned before long, how every possible sort of case could be successfully lost: there was no way of getting out of court that we had not tested.

This chapter upon Mr. Prentiss' legal career cannot be more fitly closed than by the following admirable analysis.

The last way we learned was *via* a verdict: it was a considerable triumph to get *to* a jury, though it seemed a sufficiently easy matter to get away from one again. But the perils of the road from the writ to an issue or issues—for there were generally several of them—were great indeed. The way was infested and ambushed, with all imaginable points of practice, quirks and quibbles, that had strayed off from the litigation of every sort of foreign judicature—that had been successfully tried in, or been driven out of, regularly organized forums, besides a smart sprinkling of indigenous growth. Nothing was settled. Chaos had come again, or rather, had never gone away. Order, Heaven's first law, seemed unwilling to remain where there was no other law to keep it company. I spoke of the thirty or forty barristers on their first legs—but I omitted to speak of the older members who had had the advantage of several years' practice and experience. These were the leaders on the Circuit. They had the law—that is, the practice and rulings of the courts—and kept it as a close monopoly. The earliest information we got of it was when some precious dogma was drawn out on us with fatal effect. They had conned the statutes for the last fifteen years, which were inaccessible to us, and we occasionally, much to our astonishment, got the benefit of instruction in a clause or two of 'the act in such cases made and provided' at a considerable tuition fee to be paid by our clients. Occasionally, too, a repealed statute was revived for our especial benefit. The courts being forbidden to charge except as specially asked, took away from us, in a great measure, the protection of the natural guardians of our ignorant innocence: there could be no prayer for general relief, and we did not—many of us—know how to pray specially, and always ran great risk of prejudicing our cases before the jury, by having instructions refused. It was better to trust to the 'uncovenanted mercies' of the jury, and risk a decision on the honesty of the thing, than blunder along after charges. As to reserving points, except as a bluff or scarecrow, that was a thing unheard of: the Supreme Court was a perfect *terra incognita*: we had all heard there was such a place, as we had heard of Heaven's Chancery, to which the Accusing Spirit *took up* Uncle Toby's oath, but we as little knew the way there, and as little expected to go there. Out of one thousand cases, butchered in cold blood without and with the forms of law, not one in that first year's practice, ever got to the High Court of Errors and Appeals (or, as PRENTISS called it, the Court of High Errors and Appeals). No wonder we never started. How could we ever get them there? If we had to run a gauntlet of technicalities and quibbles to get a judgment on 'a plain note of hand,' in the Circuit Court, Tam O'Shanter's race through the witches, would be nothing to the journey to and through the Supreme Court! It would have been a writ of error indeed—or rather a writ of many errors. This is but speculation, however—we never tried it—the experiment was too much even for our brass. The leaders were a good deal but not generally retained. The reason was, they wanted the money, or like Falstaff's mercer, good security; a most uncomfortable requisition with the mass of our litigants. We, of the local bar, trusted—so did our clients: it is hard to say which did the wildest credit business.

"The leaders were sharp fellows—keen as briars—*au fait* in all trap points—quick to discern small errors—perfect in forms and ceremonies—very pharisees in

It is from the pen of Edward Payson, Esq., for many years a member of the Mississippi bar :

'anise, mint, and cummin—*but neglecting judgment and the weightier matters of the law.*' They seemed to think that judicature was a tan-yard—clients skins to be curried—the court the mill, and the thing 'to work on their leather' with—*bark:* the idea that justice had anything to do with trying causes, or sense had anything to do with legal principles, never seemed to occur to them once, as a possible conception.

"Those were quashing times, and they were the *out-quashingest* set of fellows ever known. They moved to quash everything, from a *venire* to a *subpœna:* indeed, I knew one of them to quash the whole court, on the ground that the Board of Police was bound by law to furnish the building for holding the Court, and there was no proof that the building in which the court was sitting was so furnished. They usually, however, commenced at the *capias*—and kept quashing on until they got to the forthcoming bond which, being set aside, released the security for the debt, and then, generally, it was no use to quash anything more. In one court, forthcoming bonds, to the amount of some hundred thousands of dollars, were quashed, because the execution was written 'State of Mississippi' instead of '*the* State of Mississippi,' the constitution requiring the style of process to be the State of Mississippi; a quashing process which vindicated the constitution at the expense of the foreign creditors in the matter of these bonds, almost as effectively as a subsequent vindication in respect of other bonds, about which more clamor was raised.

"Attachments were much resorted to, there being about that time, as the pressure was coming on, a lively stampede to Texas. It became the interest of the debtors and their securities, and of rival creditors, to quash these, and quashed they were, almost without exception. J. H. was sheriff of W., and used to keep a book in which he noted the disposition of the cases called on the docket. Opposite nearly every attachment case, was the brief annotation—'*quashed* for the lack of form.' This fatality surprised me at first, as the statute declared the attachment law should be liberally construed, and gave a form, and the act required only the substantial requisites of the form to be observed; but it seems the form given for the bond in the statute, varied materially from the requirements of the statute in other portions of the act; and so the circuit courts held the forms to be a sort of legislative gull trap, by following which the creditor lost his debt.

"This ingenious turn for quibbling derived great assistance and many occasions of exercise, from the manner in which business had been done, and the character of the officials who did it, or rather who didn't do it. The justice of the peace, probate judges, and clerks, and sheriffs, were not unfrequently in a state of as unsophisticated ignorance of conventionalities as could be desired by J. J. Rousseau, or any other eulogist of the savage state. They were all elected by the people, who neither knew nor cared whether they were qualified or not. If they were 'good fellows,' and *wanted* the office, that is, were too poor and lazy to support themselves in any other way, that was enough. If poor John Rogers, with nine small children and one at the breast, had been in Mississippi instead of Smithfield, he could have got any office he wanted, that is, if he had quit preaching and taken to treating. The result of these official blunders was, that about every other thing

WESTBROOK, ME., *March* 24, 1855.

Your favor of 19th inst. is received, and I hasten to comply with your request that I should give you my impressions of your brother as a lawyer and advocate, only regretting that I cannot send you something which would be at once a more worthy tribute to his memory, and a more effectual service to you.

Without, then, attempting an elaborate analysis of his character, or aiming at anything like rhetorical sequence, but putting down my thoughts in the order they present themselves, I should say, first of all, that the secret of his brilliant success, not only as an advocate and a lawyer, but as a popular orator and a forensic debater, is not to be looked for in any one or two elements belonging to him, but in an extraordinary assemblage of both moral and intellectual gifts, most fortunately and harmoniously blended together. And should I attempt to distinguish between these two classes, where both existed in such perfection, I should unhesitatingly award the precedence to that first named. Confessedly transcendent as were his strictly intellectual endowments, he held them, to a considerable extent, in common

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done at all, was done wrong; indeed, the only question was as between *void and voidable*. Even in capital cases, the convictions were worth nothing —the record not showing enough to satisfy the High Court that the prisoner was tried in the county, or at the place required by law, or that the grand jury were freeholders, &c., of the county where the offence was committed, or that they had found a bill. They had put an old negro, Cupid, in C—— county, in question for his life, and convicted him three times, but the conviction never would stick. The last time the jury brought him in guilty, he was very composedly eating an apple. The sheriff asked him how he liked the idea of being hung. 'Hung,' said he—'hung! You don't think they are going to *hang* me, do you? I don't mind these little circuit judges; wait till old *Shurkey* says the word in the High Court, and then it will be time enough to be getting ready.'

"But if quashing was the general order of the day, it was the special order when the State docket was taken up. Such quashing of indictments! It seemed as by a curious display of skill in missing, the pleader never could get an indictment to hold water. I recollect S., who was prosecuting *pro tem.* for the State, convicted a poor Indian of murder, the Indian having only counsel volunteering on his arraignment; S. turned around and said with emphatic complacency: 'I tell you, gentlemen, there is a fatality attending my indictments.' 'Yes,' rejoined B., 'they *are* generally quashed.'"

with others; but his moral and emotional organization, constructed as it was on the most exquisite and liberal scale, very few have ever held in common with him. To this he was indebted very largely for his success, and this it was that in a peculiar sense, not only set him far out beyond the ranks of the common herd, but even among his compeers and professional associates, ever ranked him as an individual.

I am not aware of any single word in our language that denotes the broad basis upon which this part of his character rested. The German, if any, I rather imagine, would supply it. If the three words, *heartiness*, *sincerity*, *sympathy*, could be fused into one, they would, perhaps, cover the whole ground. It was this quality, in the degree that he possessed it, which gave first a point, a strength, an intensity, to his own convictions, and imparted afterwards such wonderful fervor to his eloquence when he sought to impress them upon others. "*Si vis me flere, primum dolendum est tibi.*" To strongly move others, the speaker must be strongly moved himself—or rather, *it must be of his nature to be* strongly moved. A mere affectation of being moved will not answer, and he who requires to be *taught* the above maxim, had nearly as well remain ignorant of it. *Poeta nascitur, non fit.* Any results in the power of such an affectation to produce, will be better compared to the spasmodic, unnatural contortions of the corpse under the galvanic battery, than to the nervous, spontaneous, and, in the effect of their example, contagious efforts of the living man.

But of all men whom it has been my fortune to know, there is not one of whom it could be said with greater truth, that he needed *not* to be taught the maxim quoted above, than of your brother. To say that he possessed in an extraordinary degree the attribute I am ascribing to him, would be less true than to say that it possessed him. It was *an* all-pervading, and *the* all-controlling element in his nature. To omit this from an estimate of his character, would be, to borrow an expression from Macaulay, like omitting the character of Hamlet or Lear from those dramas. It was of his very essence. By its aid every subject, even to the most dry and withered, became vitalized

under his touch—not merely adorned by his fancy, illustrated by his imagination, and irradiated as to its exterior by his understanding, but impenetrated by his own kindling warmth, and wrought, as the iron from the glowing forge in the hands of the workman, into obedient shape. The advantage he thus possessed beyond anything within the power of pure intellect to bestow, was hardly less than that the compound blowpipe possesses over ordinary and simple combustion; a remark which, taken in a little more extended sense, may serve to illustrate more fully what has been said before—that in every company, and in every task to which he applied himself, he was still an individual, not one of a class. Not satisfied with lavishing upon him those eminent qualities which he shared in common with others, Nature, in a mood of unwonted prodigality, added this special gift, which, in the same degree, she has seldom bestowed upon her greatest favorites. It was not merely a Benjamin's portion—a mere excess compared with what his brethren had received, but something differing in kind, as was the attribute of being invulnerable given to Achilles by his mother, when she plunged him into the Styx.

Closely connected with, and growing in part out of this quality, was that generous hope, that consciousness of power, and that unsimulated ease, which are so essential to the orator, and which, I may say without fear of contradiction, were so uniformly and so singularly characteristic of your brother. His audience felt themselves perfectly safe in his hands, even in his boldest flights. If he "went up like a rocket," they were disturbed by no fears lest he should "come down like a stick." Indeed, so completely was their attention engrossed by the argument, that there was little left to be bestowed upon him who made it. Much as there was in his manner and whole appearance to arrest attention, from the significant nod of the head to the strikingly intellectual countenance, radiant all over with a vital intelligence, it was ever his subject, and not himself, that filled the eye of the beholder. I believe it is Cowper who, in one of his letters, speaking of Lord Mansfield, alludes to the intelligent smile upon his features, even when engaged upon

a case of the greatest intricacy, that evidently bespoke the ease of his mental operations. I feel assured the same thing must have been often noticed in the subject of these remarks. I have myself watched him with an interest and a curiosity like that with which, in an extensive machine-shop, I have gazed, half incredulously, upon the unpretending, uniform, unhesitating movement of some isolated portion of the machinery, clothed with a wonderful energy, while the motive power was itself out of sight.

But I must confine myself to a general, and, what I trust may prove to be, a suggestive outline, rather than attempt anything like minuteness of detail. Significantly auxiliary to that first, dominant element of his nature—dwelling with it in such intimate union, and producing such kindred results as to seem at times almost identical with it, was his imagination. As it would be difficult to determine which of these two mutual allies gained most to itself by the aid of the other, so it would be equally difficult to estimate the rich revenue which unitedly they brought to their possessor. The faculty of which I am now speaking is held in very different estimation according to the office severally assigned to it by different individuals. In its more popular and commonly-received acceptation, it is synonymous with its adjective—imaginative; which last word, by long usage and general sanction, has come to have a meaning of its own quite beyond anything in the root from which it is derived. It indicates something opposite to, and inconsistent with, the more solid and substantial qualities. To say that a man is imaginative, is equivalent to saying that he is *not* a profound man, and in proportion as this quality belongs to him, he is supposed to be unsafe and unsound, possibly even to the point of being visionary, wild, fantastic. But, assuredly, it is in no such inferior sense as this that I now use the term imagination, but rather in that far higher sense of a creative faculty, conducting to the discovery, assisting in the analysis, revealing the very essence of divine truths; and when found, as in the present instance, associated with an intense emotional energy, including all that is meant by the somewhat vague but comprehensive term

genius. It is indeed an Aladdin's lamp to its possessor, rendering obedient to his bidding genii, that are deaf to the call of those who are without it—an "open sesame," divulging to his eye, and placing at his control, treasures of incalculable value, for ever locked, alas! against the multitude, who admire and envy, but may not so much as touch. Imagination with him was not a disturbing, nor a dissipating influence, but the very opposite of all this—it gave force, intensity, concentration to his other powers.

And I am the more particular to advert to the above distinction, because, when recognized and properly understood, it will go far to dispose of a question which, at an early period of his history, was not unfrequently asked respecting your brother, and one which it is possible still remains, to some extent, unsettled. You will readily anticipate the question to be this—whether his imagination did not exist, if not to the exclusion, at least to the prejudice, of a more sober and practical development? And before proceeding to a more direct examination of this question, it may be worth while to glance for a moment at some of the external *accidents* of his position when he first entered public life, since I doubt not that these had much to do towards fixing a false and injurious estimate of his character.

It is as a candidate for public favor that he first attracts our notice. He has hitherto been known, when known at all, as a private teacher, somewhere in the neighborhood of aristocratic Natchez, where distinctions of caste existed in the most rigorous and tyrannical form—where the pedagogical office, which had to do with the planter's white children, ranked next in degree below that of overseer to his blacks who hoed in his cotton-field, and where the only question asked about the Yankee tribe was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We discover at a glance how intolerably irksome such a situation must have proved to such a man as he of whom I am speaking. We can imagine his restiveness under a yoke peculiarly galling to one of his proud and generous nature, his indignation never wholly, scarce half, suppressed at the assumed superiority, the supercilious arrogance reposing com-

placently upon cotton-bales, and little else; and as we seem almost to hear the quick rejoinder, the well-timed and cutting rebuke, under whose infliction some as yet uninitiated and offending wight slinks cowardly off, we are reminded of a trespassing cur, who, startled at the growl of the chained mastiff he has aroused, will be careful in future to learn the length of the chain before he ventures near. We can imagine, too, how impatiently he awaits those distant honors of which he must at least faintly foresee he is to be the future proprietor. We seem to note the very foot-prints smoothly worn by his nervous tread, in restless round, over the floor of his narrow prison, through whose bars he even now glares, almost fiercely, in anticipation of the rioting feast that awaits him. And these days shall not last always. A consuming thirst is within him, an appetite sharpened by long protracted fasting. The door is at length thrown open, and with tense nerve and lithe limb, at a single leap, he bounds into the very middle of the arena. Hardly has his foot touched the sand, when the huzzas of the assembled multitude proclaim his triumph. With scarce a feeble show of resistance, the victim has yielded. He now knows the taste of blood, and he likes it well. The "stump," in these days, is in all its glory. No longer ago, even, than his time, politics were possessed of a vitality which seems almost impossible to one who surveys their present state of apathy and death. Jacksonism was a very different sort of thing from that miserable drab called Fusionism, at once the parent and the child of imbecility. Politics, too, in Mississippi, was a very different thing from politics in the older States. It was almost the only channel in which the thoughts of nineteen-twentieths of the population strongly flowed, and here it was they made their nearest approximation to anything like intellectual activity or enjoyment. Almost every man was a tolerable politician, and a notice of a barbacue, when the first course was to consist of a stirring speech, was sure to attract men whose minds would have nearly perished of starvation, but for the provision thus made for them.

And now the name of PRENTISS gave to these meetings an

additional attraction, and the more so, when it came to be known how well he understood, and how capable he was of supplying their wants. The racy anecdote—the piquant jest—the keen irony—the scathing denunciation—the withering rebuke—the striking metaphor—the apt illustration, all which, as everybody knows, he scattered right and left in such prodigal profusion, went to make up that highly seasoned dish his hearers loved so well. But even on occasions like these, favorable as they doubtless were to the exhibition of skill, and grace, and ingenuity, rather than of sterner qualities, and adapted as they were to develop those which may safely be called inferior gifts, that principle of heartiness in his nature already alluded to, was still asserting its supremacy, and compelled him, in spite of himself, if I may use so strong an expression, to have an aim in view, and to keep his eye upon it. The river flowed, it is true, through a country of tropical luxuriance, in whose bosom were reflected the warmth and the glow of a southern sky, and the gorgeous array of rose-tinted clouds; its banks on either side exhibiting in endless profusion flowers of every varied hue. But for all that the river did not stop its flowing. It still rolled on in undiminished volume, in its own deep, well-defined, appointed channel, a full and sweeping tide, to its appointed end.

It was, then, in the field of oratory, emphatically of *popular* oratory, that your brother won his spurs. First in order of time came the exhibition, perhaps the development, of those lighter and more graceful accomplishments supposed to be characteristic of the orator, rather than those severer and sterner qualities that belong to the lawyer and advocate. But coming first in the order of time, they fixed the *first* estimate of his character; and it is not too much to say, that the brilliant reputation he had already won in that capacity, stood in the way of his adding to it another equally brilliant, which by common consent must rest upon attributes not only differing from, but supposed to be incompatible with, those already exhibited. It is necessary that his former achievments in a former field should be forgotten, before men will believe him capable of new ones in a new field; and even when the proof is forthcoming, the mind hesitates to

let go its first impression. They who have only just turned admiringly away from witnessing the dextrous sleight of Saladin, will be slow to believe that the same arm will presently swing with equal ease the battle-axe of a Richard.

These, then, were the circumstances under which the question before named had its origin, and we need not deny that it was a natural question. That a symmetrical development is the exception, and not the rule, we may safely admit, and that an unusual development in one direction is *primâ facie* evidence of a deficiency elsewhere, we may also admit. But the evidence is *primâ facie* only. Diverse as two sets of faculties may be, there is surely in the *necessity* of the case no such antagonism between them as to preclude the possibility of both being found united in great perfection in the same individual. True indeed it is, that such a union is not often found; but Nature loves to disappoint our complacent calculations—to show her disdain for those set formularies by which we seek to limit her freedom, and her contempt for that exact, slavish, narrow-minded criticism, which, remembering that the dray-horse is not suited for the turf, would apply the analogy, at once absurd and degrading, to the soul of man.

And since the estimate I am attempting to present of your brother as a man, is designed to be only subsidiary to my main purpose of showing what might, *à priori*, have been expected of him as a lawyer, I remark further, that even were it true that a diversity of gifts is to be had only at the price of possessing some of them in an inferior degree, it is still a price that may well be paid in a profession like that of the law, where the diversity of which I speak, contributing largely as it does towards a common and partial success, is absolutely indispensable in order to attain the highest. If there be any into whose net nothing comes amiss, it is the lawyer; and to him, with greater propriety than to almost any other, may be offered the admonition given to his son by the thrifty husbandman, "to waste nothing, since at some time a place shall be found for the most worthless scrap."

Happily, however, no such sacrifice as that just alluded to was

required of your brother. As was said at the commencement of these remarks, there was found in him a remarkable, and at the same time most healthful union of manifold attributes, subsisting not at variance with, or to the prejudice of each other, but dwelling together in a bond of fraternal amity—a league for mutual aid. If he possessed a mind eminently graceful, capable of investing the most rugged and difficult paths with the charms of poesy, it was a mind, too, that gave no sign of fainting in that fiercer grapple—those closer encounters, to which the massive strength of a sinewy intellect alone is equal. If with despotic energy and license, he subsidized the universe to his imagery, he no less submissively acknowledged the authority of a rigid taste, which always and instantly discarded mere tinkling gauds and meretricious ornaments. If by the aid of his imagination the path of his argument was attended by a brilliancy almost dazzling, it could not be said of it, as was once remarked of a production of the celebrated John Foster, "all luminous, but no light." There was both light and heat, and if the first ever seemed in excess, we should remember—to recur to the illustration of the blow-pipe—that it was *steel* which was burning. Was he gifted with a fluency of speech not only far beyond the common average, but to an extent rarely witnessed even in the most distinguished speakers, it still was not a fluency that obscured or kept back his meaning; but so swiftly obedient did each word answer to the gentle summons—so orderly and so gracefully did it fall into place, that whole sentences seemed to present themselves as so many many-syllabled words, ready formed to his mind.

Having taken this very general, and necessarily imperfect survey of his character as a man, with a view to the *à priori* argument which it furnishes as to what might be expected of his chances as a lawyer, there remains but little room, and but little necessity too, for inquiring how far the argument is sustained by the *facts* in his history. But as the sketch may appear to be incomplete without them, I proceed to add a few words illustrative of this point. And in this connection, it is all-important to bear in mind how utterly dissimilar are all the accidents upon which rest, and by whose aid are built up, the reputations

respectively of the lawyer and the orator. To the *highest* efforts of the former—those efforts upon which his reputation must chiefly rest—who, and how many are the witnesses? The judges on the bench, in some instances the parties interested in the suit, and perhaps a score more or less of his professional brethren, his competitors in the race, in a vast majority of cases compose his audience. The question at issue—involving as it may momentous rights—has for the most part only a local importance, very rarely extends beyond the limits of the State where it arises, and is totally destitute of that general, national interest which attaches to those great political truths that so frequently fall within the province of the public speaker. A legal reputation, then, which extends beyond the boundaries of the State where it is acquired, must necessarily be of slow growth and difficult acquisition. But the same condition of things which renders its acquisition slow and difficult, renders the proof upon which it rests also difficult. But I must not enlarge. The allusion once made, it can hardly fail to suggest a multitude of similar reflections all to the same purpose, which taken together fully explain the inequality of proof in the two cases, and show that any inference drawn from it—in this particular instance—prejudicial to your brother's reputation in that department where the proof is least accessible, would be erroneous.

And an examination of the judicial records of the State where he spent the larger portion of his professional life, would abundantly and unequivocally corroborate the *a priori* view already presented. The Mississippi bar at this time was distinguished for its ability. The great financial embarrassment, commencing in 1835, and extending through a series of years, the insolvent or crippled condition of Southern merchants, resulting from this embarrassment and forcing Northern creditors to resort to compulsory measures to recover their debts; above all, the explosion of the most extensive, and extensively corrupt and fraudulent banking system ever known, which added greatly to the already existing entanglement and perplexity—these things altogether furnished a most fruitful source of contention which the courts were called upon to adjust. The amount of property thus at stake was immense. Litigation

became the order of the day.* Lawyers swarmed in every town and village, and notwithstanding the multitude to be provided for, the fund, for a time at least, showed no signs of exhaustion. The supply could not exceed the demand. As one result, most exorbitant fees were exacted, and freely paid. As another result, a personal acumen, keen to discover this fact, attracted here a great legal acumen to take advantage of it, and as has been remarked already, the bar which assembled in term time at Jackson, the seat of government, included within it men highly gifted by nature, who, by close study and long experience, had made attainments in the science of law not often surpassed.

But occupying, as it did, this high position, it is no thoughtless panegyric which proclaims him of whom I am writing its brightest ornament. Others might, doubtless, have been selected who approached, nay, who reached the same level with himself in some one or more particulars, but in that *wholeness* of character already attributed to him, he far, very far, outstripped them all. In most, if not all the cases of first importance, where large interests were involved, or great principles of law were to be applied, his name, on one side or the other, is found as counsel, showing him to have been in the enjoyment of a practice as honorable, as extensive, as lucrative, as probably ever fell to the lot of a man similarly situated with himself.

And now occurs an event in his life which strongly illus-

* The following extract from a letter, written by a legal friend, under date of VICKSBURG, April 18, 1838, will show with what violence litigation was raging at that point—and also how many were in readiness to help it on. The case was substantially the same throughout the State.

"To your inquiries about business, a paper I sent you some time ago, containing our advertisement, will give you the best information. We will hereafter have as much to do as we can well manage; particularly of heavily litigated business. If you had been inclined to accept your brother's generous proposition to become a member of the legal profession, now would have been your harvest. There are two thousand and five hundred suits brought to the May term, 1838, of the Circuit Court of this county alone—more than a suit to each voter! We bring more than a hundred of these—which is considerably more than the average to each lawyer—there being about sixty lawyers in town. We will also bring from twenty to fifty Chancery suits, the fee in each of which will be handsome. So that, to make the matter short, we are doing very well."—ED.

trates that generous hope, that consciousness of power which belonged to his nature. Disgusted with a State deeply branded with the stigma of repudiation—that vile thing he so deeply loathed and so bitterly denounced—and attracted to a field where his versatile genius should have a wider scope and a more varied exercise, he turns his back upon the scene of his earlier triumphs and his later success, to commence over again the gallant struggle. He becomes a resident of the neighboring State of Louisiana, the only State in this Union where the Civil Law is found. He enters the lists where he must contend with weapons to which he is all unused, to find himself arrayed against veterans in the profession, whose fame was fully established as long ago as when, if not himself despised, he held the despised office of a teacher of youth on the banks of the Mississippi—veterans who for years, so active had been the service, might almost be said to have slept upon their arms, and who had become perfectly familiar with all the intricate by-ways of that intricate system. A most hazardous venture, that few indeed would have tried, and from which fewer still would have wrested success. But even here Fortune follows her favorite, and suffers not the laurel with which she has decked his brow to fade or wither. But this sketch has already swelled far beyond my intention, and I may not follow him further. A few words relative to his success in the department of Criminal Law, and I have done.

That in the most dire exigence which ever happens to men in this world, services such as your brother was pre-eminently calculated to render should fail to be in constant requisition, is not to be expected. We accordingly find him, either in his own or a neighboring State, continually employed to defend men arraigned for offences whose penalty was death; and if the success attending his efforts cannot be called remarkable, it is only because in *all* such cases, acquittal was the rule—conviction the exception—a remark which is, perhaps, true, though not to the same extent, of even the older States.* Altogether aside

* It was in criminal trials that the juniors flourished. We went into them with the same feeling of irresponsibility that Allen Fairfield went into the trial of poor

from any of the accidents belonging to the case, a conviction for capital crime is a difficult thing everywhere. The leaning is all in favor of the accused. The legal maxim which gives him the "benefit of a doubt," is strongly seconded by the natural instincts of the heart, which, while it weighs the evidence, still never forgets the terrible penalty. A recent successful prosecution, obtained, it is true, against unusual odds, even in law-abiding, order-loving Massachusetts, was hardly less a cause of surprise than of gratification.

But when to these inherent obstacles is superadded a condi-

Peter Peeble's suit *vs.* Plainstaines, namely—that there was but little danger of hurting the case. Any ordinary jury would have acquitted nine cases out of ten without counsel's instigating them thereto—to say nothing of the hundred avenues of escape through informalities and technical points. In fact, criminals were so unskillfully defended in many instances, that the jury had to acquit in spite of the counsel. Almost anything made out a case of self-defence—a threat—a quarrel—an insult—going armed, as almost all the wild fellows did—shooting from behind a corner, or out of a store door, in front or from behind—it was all self-defence! The only skill in the matter, was in getting the right sort of a jury, which fact could be easily ascertained, either from the general character of the men, or from certain discoveries the defendant had been enabled to make in his mingling among "his friends and the public generally,"—for they were all, or nearly all, let out on bail or without it. Usually, the sheriff, too, was a friendly man, and not inclined to omit a kind service that was likely to be remembered with gratitude at the next election.

The major part of criminal cases, except misdemeanors, were for killing, or assaults with intent to kill. They were usually defended upon points of chivalry. The iron rules of British law were too tyrannical for free Americans, and too cold and unfeeling for the hot blood of the sunny South. They were denounced accordingly, and practically scouted from Mississippi judicature, on the broad ground that they were unsuited to the genius of American institutions and the American character. There was nothing technical in this, certainly.

But if the case was a hopeless or very dangerous one, there was another way to get rid of it. "The world was all before" the culprit "where to choose." The jails were in such a condition—generally small log pens—that they held the prisoner very little better than did the indictment: for the most part, they held no one but Indians, who had no friend outside who could help them, and no skill inside to prize out. It was a matter of free election for the culprit in a desperate case, whether he would remain in jail or not; and it is astonishing how few exercised their privilege in favor of staying. The pains of exile seemed to present no stronger *bars* to expatriation, than the jail doors or windows.

The inefficiency of the arresting officers, too, was generally such that the malefactor could wind up his affairs and leave before the constable was on his track. If he gave bail, there were the chances of breaking the bond or recognizance, and the assurance against injury, derived from the fact that the recognizors were already broke.—*The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*, p. 59.

tion of society tending to produce similar results, the difficulty is increased so as hardly to admit of being overestimated. The very laxity and inefficiency of the law furnishes the accused with a most legitimate plea of justification, and indeed has much to do in the interpretation and application of the maxims which define the offence. To determine what constitutes a "a reasonable ground of alarm," so as to render a homicide justifiable as being in necessary self-defence, we must first know how far the authority of the State affords a protection, and how far each one is left to depend upon his own arm for defence. To compel a man to "flee to the wall," even in the weakest sense the expression will admit of, in a country where the chances are that his opponent has a revolver in his pocket, and a bowie-knife under his vest, especially if at the same time there be small fear before his eyes of any law to deter him from using them, would seem an absurdity hard to be exceeded. *To qualify herself for a successful prosecutor, the State must first prove herself to be a competent guardian.* Paradox as it may appear to be—it is still true, that in a state of society where the carrying of deadly weapons is tolerated and practised, life is held very cheap, and at the same time very valuable; and a man who, in a sudden affray, or under a slight provocation, would not hesitate to take another's life, transferred to the jury-box, refuses to award the punishment of death, however justly merited.

The influence, too, of the survivor—I mean the accused party—and of his friends, is capable of being exerted in very different degrees, as the society of which he is a member is more or less advanced, and is more or less under the authority of efficient laws. During my residence in Mississippi, I had offered to my notice, more than once, a practical illustration of this remark. Other similar considerations might be adduced to the same purpose, but it seems unnecessary to attempt a further explanation of the infrequency of such convictions, when it is rather matter for surprise that they should, under such circumstances, occur at all.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Address before the New England Society of New Orleans—Letters—Address on Behalf of the Starving Poor of Ireland—Death of his Eldest Sister—Letters—Address to the Returned Volunteers of Gen. Taylor's Army—Letters.

Æt. 37–8. 1846–7.

He began the new year, as usual, with a letter to his mother. Here it is :

New Orleans, *Jan.* 1, 1846.

My Dear Mother:—

I cannot let the day pass without sending you my most affectionate regards, and wishing you a happy New Year. I wish I was in Portland or you were here, that I might pay you in person my love and respect. I trust you are well and happy, and that many new years to come will continue to find you so; for your happiness is multiplied among all your children, and when you enjoy health and comfort, it fills us all with pleasure. Mary and Abby have both written you to-day, and I suppose given you all the news; so I shall not have much to say. We have at length got fairly settled down in New Orleans, and begin to feel at home. I am much pleased with the change, and like New Orleans a great deal better than Vicksburg. We are quite pleasantly situated, and have a nice house. I am gratified with my prospects here, and do not doubt I shall succeed very well. I have already considerable business, and if my health is spared, do not fear for the future. I only regret I did not move here many years ago.

The weather has been unusually cold and rainy, though now

it is delightful. It is astonishing how Abby has stood it. I think she has continued to improve ever since she came out, notwithstanding the bad weather, and I have no doubt if she continues to hold on till the warm spring days, she will then improve rapidly. You cannot imagine what a comfort it is to have her with us. Mary loves her very much, and the children are as fond of her as they are of their mother. I don't know how we should have got along without her this winter. Captain D. and Mr. P. arrived here almost a week ago, and will be here several weeks; they stay up with us a good deal. We have a room for them, and they sleep and eat here whenever they choose. I never saw Capt. D. in finer health and spirits. We are all quite well, except bad colds. I have suffered more than I ever did in my life from them, but am now getting over them. Jeanie has not recovered entirely from the effects of her fever, but is better. I delivered an oration on the 22d of December, before the New England Society, which was very well received. I sent you a copy, which I hope got on safe. And now, my dear mother, I must say good-bye. God bless you, and preserve you to us all; may many and happy days await you! Such is the fervent prayer of

Your affectionate son,

SERGEANT.

The address alluded to was written in haste, amidst the cares of moving, and is, I think, inferior in style and eloquence to many of his impromptu speeches. Still, it is a beautiful expression of his New England feelings, and was well adapted to an audience largely composed of persons who had rarely, or never, listened to a eulogy of the Pilgrim Fathers.*

* The announcement that Mr. PRENTISS would address the New England Society, was hailed with enthusiasm by all our citizens, and has been a prominent interest for the last few weeks. * * * His description of the voyage and landing of the Pilgrims were pictures of the highest merit; and when he said the vessel that carried Cæsar had ignoble freight compared with the May Flower, the audience responded with exultation. * * * We have often listened to Mr. PREN-

His friend, Mr. Crittenden, writes him under date of WASHINGTON CITY, Feb. 16th: "I have read, with the greatest pleasure, your late speech on the anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims. It is, indeed, a noble effort, and richly have you been rewarded with the public admiration. I have known nothing of that kind that has received so much applause. I thought it well merited, and I rejoiced in it."

ADDRESS ON THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS.

This is a day dear to the sons of New England, and ever held by them in sacred remembrance. On this day, from every quarter of the globe, they gather in spirit around the Rock of Plymouth, and hang upon the urns of their Pilgrim Fathers the garlands of filial gratitude and affection. We have assembled for the purpose of participating in this honorable duty; of perform- this pious pilgrimage. To-day we will visit that memorable spot. We will gaze upon the place where a feeble band of persecuted exiles founded a mighty nation: and our hearts will exult with proud gratification as we remember that on that barren shore our ancestors planted not only empire but Freedom. We will meditate upon their toils, their sufferings, and their virtues, and to-morrow return to our daily avocations, with minds refreshed and improved by the contemplation of their high principles and noble purposes.

The human mind cannot be contented with the present. It is ever journeying through the trodden regions of the past, or making adventurous excursions into the mysterious realms of the future. He who lives only in the present, is but a brute, and has not attained the human dignity. Of the future but little is

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TISS; he has always been eloquent beyond compeer. His oration yesterday was a master-piece, full of thoughts that breathe and words that burn; but the occasion, sacred as it was to the associations of the heart, was not one to call forth his powerful mind; and the self-imposed restraint of notes confined his soaring imagination, and made us think, brilliant as he was, of Apollo bound.—*New Orleans Commercial Times, Dec.* 23, 1845.

known; clouds and darkness rest upon it; we yearn to become acquainted with its hidden secrets; we stretch out our arms towards its shadowy inhabitants; we invoke our posterity, but they answer us not. We wander in its dim precincts till reason becomes confused, and at last start back in fear, like mariners who have entered an unknown ocean, of whose winds, tides, currents, and quicksands they are wholly ignorant. Then it is we turn for relief to the past, that mighty reservoir of men and things. There we have something tangible to which our sympathies can attach; upon which we can lean for support; from whence we can gather knowledge and learn wisdom. There we are introduced into Nature's vast laboratory and witness her elemental labors. We mark with interest the changes in continents and oceans by which she has notched the centuries. But our attention is still more deeply aroused by the great moral events, which have controlled the fortunes of those who have preceded us, and still influence our own. With curious wonder, we gaze down the long aisles of the past, upon the generations that are gone. We behold, as in a magic glass, men in form and feature like ourselves, actuated by the same motives, urged by the same passions, busily engaged in shaping out both their own destinies and ours. We approach them, and they refuse not our invocation. We hold converse with the wise philosophers, the sage legislators and the divine poets. We enter the tent of the general, and partake of his most secret counsels. We go forth with him to the battle-field, and behold him place his glittering squadrons; then we listen with a pleasing fear to the trumpet and the drum, or the still more terrible music of the booming cannon and the clashing arms. But most of all, among the innumerable multitudes who peopled the past, we seek our own ancestors, drawn towards them by an irresistible sympathy. Indeed, they were our other selves. With reverent solicitude we examine into their character and actions, and as we find them worth or unworthy, our hearts swell with pride, or our cheeks glow with shame. We search with avidity for the most trivial circumstances in their history, and eagerly treasure up every memento of their fortunes. The instincts of our nature bind us

indissolubly to them and link our fates with theirs. Men cannot live without a past; it is as essential to them as a future. Into its vast confines we still journey to-day, and converse with our Pilgrim Fathers. We will speak to them and they shall answer us.

Two centuries and a quarter ago, a little tempest-tost, weather-beaten bark, barely escaped from the jaws of the wild Atlantic, landed upon the bleakest shore of New England. From her deck disembarked a hundred and one care-worn exiles. To the casual observer no event could seem more insignificant. The contemptuous eye of the world scarcely deigned to notice it. Yet the famous vessel that bore Cæsar and his fortunes, carried but an ignoble freight compared with that of the Mayflower. Her little band of pilgrims brought with them neither wealth nor power, but the principles of civil and religious freedom. They planted them, for the first time in the Western Continent. They cherished, cultivated and developed them to a full and luxuriant maturity; and then furnished them to their posterity as the only sure and permanent foundations for a free government. Upon those foundations rests the fabric of our great Republic: upon those principles depends the career of human liberty. Little did the miserable pedant and bigot who then wielded the sceptre of Great Britain, imagine that from this feeble settlement of persecuted and despised Puritans, in a century and a half, would arise a nation capable of coping with his own mighty empire in arts and arms.

It is not my purpose to enter into the history of the Pilgrims; to recount the bitter persecutions and ignominious sufferings which drove them from England; to tell of the eleven years of peace and quiet spent in Holland, under their beloved and venerated pastor; nor to describe the devoted patriotism which prompted them to plant a colony in some distant land, where they could remain citizens of their native country and at the same time be removed from its oppressions: where they could enjoy liberty without violating allegiance. Neither shall I speak of the perils of their adventurous voyage; of the hardships of their early settlement; of the famine which prostrated, and the pestilence which consumed them.

With all these things you are familiar, both from the page of history and from the lips of tradition. On occasions similar to this, the ablest and most honored sons of New England have been accustomed to tell, with touching eloquence, the story of their sufferings, their fortitude, their perseverance, and their success. With pious care, they have gathered and preserved the scattered memorials of those early days, and the names of Carver, Bradford, Winslow, Standish, and their noble companions, have long since become with us venerated household words.

There were, however, some traits that distinguished the enterprise of the Pilgrims from all others, and which are well worthy of continued remembrance. In founding their colony they sought neither wealth nor conquest, but only peace and freedom. They asked but for a region where they could make their own laws, and worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. From the moment they touched the shore, they labored, with orderly, systematic, and persevering industry. They cultivated, without a murmur, a poor and ungrateful soil, which even now yields but a stubborn obedience to the dominion of the plough. They made no search for gold, nor tortured the miserable savages to wring from them the discovery of imaginary mines. Though landed by a treacherous pilot upon a barren and inhospitable coast, they sought neither richer fields nor a more genial climate. They found liberty, and for the rest it mattered little. For more than eleven years they had meditated upon their enterprise, and it was no small matter could turn them from its completion. On the spot where first they rested from their wanderings, with stern and high resolve, they built their little city and founded their young republic. Their honesty, industry, knowledge and piety grew up together in happy union. There, in patriarchal simplicity and republican equality, the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers passed their honorable days, leaving to their posterity the invaluable legacy of their principles and example.

How proudly can we compare their conduct with that of the adventurers of other nations who preceded them. How did the Spaniard colonize? Let Mexico, Peru and Hispaniola answer. He followed in the train of the great Discoverer, like a devour-

ing pestilence. His cry was gold! gold!! gold!!! Never in the history of the world had the *sacra fames auri* exhibited itself with such fearful intensity. His imagination maddened with visions of sudden and boundless wealth, clad in mail, he leaped upon the New World, an armed robber. In greedy haste he grasped the sparkling sand, then cast it down with curses, when he found the glittering grains were not of gold.

Pitiless as the blood-hound by his side, he plunged into the primeval forests, crossed rivers, lakes, and mountains, and penetrated to the very heart of the continent. No region, however rich in soil, delicious in climate, or luxuriant in production, could tempt his stay. In vain the soft breeze of the tropics, laden with aromatic fragrance, woed him to rest; in vain the smiling valleys, covered with spontaneous fruits and flowers, invited him to peaceful quiet. His search was still for gold: the accursed hunger could not be appeased. The simple natives gazed upon him in superstitious wonder, and worshipped him as a god; and he proved to them a god, but an infernal one—terrible, cruel and remorseless. With bloody hands he tore the ornaments from their persons, and the shrines from their altars: he tortured them to discover hidden treasure, and slew them that he might search, even in their wretched throats, for concealed gold. Well might the miserable Indians imagine that a race of evil deities had come among them, more bloody and relentless than those who presided over their own sanguinary rites.

Now let us turn to the Pilgrims. They, too, were tempted; and had they yielded to the temptation how different *might* have been the destinies of this Continent—how different must have been our own! Previous to their undertaking, the Old World was filled with strange and wonderful accounts of the New. The unbounded wealth, drawn by the Spaniards from Mexico and South America, seemed to afford rational support for the wildest assertions. Each succeeding adventurer, returning from his voyage, added to the Arabian tales a still more extravagant story. At length Sir Walter Raleigh, the most accomplished and distinguished of all those bold voyageurs, announced to the world his discovery of the province Guiana and its magnificent

capital, the far-famed city of El Dorado. We smile now at his account of the "great and golden city," and "the mighty, rich, and beautiful empire." We can hardly imagine that any one could have believed, for a moment, in their existence. At that day, however, the whole matter was received with the most implicit faith. Sir Walter professed to have explored the country, and thus glowingly describes it from his own observation:

"I never saw a more beautiful country, nor more lively prospects; hills so raised here and there over the valleys—the river winding into divers branches—the plains adjoining, without bush or stubble—all fair green grass—the deer crossing in every path—the birds, towards the evening, singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes—the air fresh, with a gentle easterly wind: and every stone that we stopped to take up promised either gold or silver by its complexion. For health, good air, pleasure, and riches, I am resolved it cannot be equalled by any region either in the East or West."

The Pilgrims were urged, in leaving Holland, to seek this charming country, and plant their colony among its Arcadian bowers. Well might the poor wanderers cast a longing glance towards its happy valleys, which seemed to invite to pious contemplation and peaceful labor. Well might the green grass, the pleasant groves, the tame deer, and the singing birds, allure them to that smiling land beneath the equinoctial line. But while they doubted not the existence of this wondrous region, they resisted its tempting charms. They had resolved to vindicate, at the same time, their patriotism and their principles—to add dominion to their native land, and to demonstrate to the world the practicability of civil and religious liberty. After full discussion and mature deliberation, they determined that their great objects could be best accomplished by a settlement on some portion of the Northern continent, which would hold out no temptation to cupidity—no inducement to persecution. Putting aside, then, all considerations of wealth and ease, they addressed themselves with high resolution to the accomplishment of their noble purpose. In the language of the historian, "Trusting to God and themselves," they embarked upon their perilous enterprise.

As I said before, I shall not accompany them on their adventurous voyage. On the 22d day of December, 1620, according to our present computation, their footsteps pressed the famous Rock which has ever since remained sacred to their venerated memory. Poets, painters, and orators have tasked their powers to do justice to this great scene. Indeed, it is full of moral grandeur; nothing can be more beautiful, more pathetic, or more sublime. Behold the Pilgrims, as they stood on that cold December day—stern men, gentle women, and feeble children—all uniting in singing a hymn of cheerful thanksgiving to the Good God, who had conducted them safely across the mighty deep, and permitted them to land upon that sterile shore. See how their upturned faces glow with a pious confidence which the sharp winter winds cannot chill, nor the gloomy forest shadows darken:

"Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drum,
Nor the trumpet, that sings of fame;
Nor as the flying come,
In silence and in fear—
They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer."

Noble and pious band! your holy confidence was not in vain: your "hymns of lofty cheer" find echo still in the hearts of grateful millions. Your descendants, when pressed by adversity, or when addressing themselves to some high action, turn to the "Landing of the Pilgrims," and find heart for any fate—strength for any enterprise.

How simple, yet how instructive, are the annals of this little settlement. In the cabin of the Mayflower they settled a general form of government, upon the principles of a pure democracy. In 1636 they published a declaration of rights, and established a body of laws. The first fundamental article was in these words: "That no act, imposition, law, or ordinance be made, or imposed upon us, at present or to come, but such as has been or shall be

enacted by the consent of the body of freemen or associates, or their representatives legally assembled," &c.

Here we find advanced the whole principle of the Revolution —the whole doctrine of our republican institutions. Our fathers, a hundred years before the Revolution, tested successfully, as far as they were concerned, the principle of self-government, and solved the problem, whether law and order can co-exist with liberty. But let us not forget that they were wise and good men who made the noble experiment, and that it may yet fail in our hands, unless we imitate their patriotism and virtues.

There are some who find fault with the character of the Pilgrims—who love not the simplicity of their manners, nor the austerity of their lives. They were men, and of course imperfect; but the world may well be challenged to point out in the whole course of history, men of purer purpose or braver action —men who have exercised a more beneficial influence upon the destinies of the human race, or left behind them more enduring memorials of their existence.

At all events, it is not for the sons of New England to search for the faults of their ancestors. We gaze with profound veneration upon their awful shades; we feel a grateful pride in the country they colonized—in the institutions they founded—in the example they bequeathed. We exult in our birth-place and in our lineage.

Who would not rather be of the Pilgrim stock than claim descent from the proudest Norman that ever planted his robber blood in the halls of the Saxon, or the noblest paladin that quaffed wine at the table of Charlemagne? Well may we be proud of our native land, and turn with fond affection to its rocky shores. The spirit of the Pilgrims still pervades it, and directs its fortunes. Behold the thousand temples of the Most High, that nestle in its happy valleys and crown its swelling hills. See how their glittering spires pierce the blue sky, and seem like so many celestial conductors, ready to avert the lightning of an angry Heaven. The piety of the Pilgrim Patriarchs is not yet extinct, nor have the sons forgotten the God of their fathers.

Behold yon simple building near the crossing of the village road! It is small and of rude construction, but stands in a pleasant and quiet spot. A magnificent old elm spreads its broad arms above and seems to lean towards it, as a strong man bends to shelter and protect a child. A brook runs through the meadow near, and hard by there is an orchard—but the trees have suffered much and bear no fruit, except upon the most remote and inaccessible branches. From within its walls comes a busy hum, such as you may hear in a disturbed bee-hive. Now peep through yonder window and you will see a hundred children, with rosy cheeks, mischievous eyes and demure faces, all engaged, or pretending to be so, in their little lessons. It is the public school—the free, the common school—provided by law: open to all: claimed from the community as a right, not accepted as a bounty. Here the children of the rich and poor, high and low, meet upon perfect equality, and commence under the same auspices the race of life. Here the sustenance of the mind is served up to all alike, as the Spartans served their food upon the public table. Here young Ambition climbs his little ladder, and boyish Genius plumes his half-fledged wing. From among these laughing children will go forth the men who are to control the destinies of their age and country; the statesman whose wisdom is to guide the Senate—the poet who will take captive the hearts of the people and bind them together with immortal song—the philosopher who, boldly seizing upon the elements themselves, will compel them to his wishes, and, through new combinations of their primal laws, by some great discovery, revolutionize both art and science.

The common village school is New England's fairest boast—the brightest jewel that adorns her brow. The principle that society is bound to provide for its members' education as well as protection, so that none need be ignorant except from choice, is the most important that belongs to modern philosophy. It is essential to a republican government. Universal education is not only the best and surest, but the only sure foundation for free institutions. True liberty is the child of knowledge; she pines away and dies in the arms of ignorance.

Honor, then, to the early fathers of New England, from whom came the spirit which has built a schoolhouse by every sparkling fountain, and bids all come as freely to the one as to the other. All honor, too, to this noble city, who has not disdained to follow the example of her Northern sisters, but has wisely determined that the intellectual thirst of her children deserves as much attention as their physical, and that it is as much her duty to provide the means of assuaging the one as of quenching the other.

But the spirit of the Pilgrims survives, not only in the knowledge and piety of their sons, but, most of all, in their indefatigable enterprise and indomitable perseverance.

They have wrestled with nature till they have prevailed against her, and compelled her reluctantly to reverse her own laws. The sterile soil has become productive under their sagacious culture, and the barren rock, astonished, finds itself covered with luxuriant and unaccustomed verdure.

Upon the banks of every river they build temples to industry, and stop the squanderings of the spendthrift waters. They bind the naïades of the brawling stream. They drive the dryades from their accustomed haunts, and force them to desert each favorite grove; for upon river, creek and bay they are busy transforming the crude forest into staunch and gallant vessels. From every inlet or indenture along the rocky shore swim forth these ocean birds—born in the wild wood, fledged upon the wave. Behold how they spread their white pinions to the favoring breeze, and wing their flight to every quarter of the globe—the carrier pigeons of the world! It is upon the unstable element the sons of New England have achieved their greatest triumphs. Their adventurous prows vex the waters of every sea. Bold and restless as the old Northern Vikings, they go forth to seek their fortunes in the mighty deep. The ocean is their pasture, and over its wide prairies they follow the monstrous herds that feed upon its azure fields. As the hunter casts his lasso upon the wild horse, so they throw their lines upon the tumbling whale. They "draw out Leviathan with a hook." They "fill his skin with barbed irons," and in spite of

his terrible strength they "part him among the merchants." To them there are no pillars of Hercules. They seek with avidity new regions, and fear not to be "the first that ever burst" into unknown seas. Had they been the companions of Columbus, the great mariner would not have been urged to return, though he had sailed westward to his dying day.

Glorious New England! thou art still true to thy ancient fame and worthy of thy ancestral honors. We, thy children, have assembled in this far-distant land to celebrate thy birth-day. A thousand fond associations throng upon us, roused by the spirit of the hour. On thy pleasant valleys rest, like sweet dews of morning, the gentle recollections of our early life; around thy hills and mountains cling, like gathering mists, the mighty memories of the Revolution; and far away in the horizon of thy past gleam, like thine own Northern Lights, the awful virtues of our Pilgrim Sires! But while we devote this day to the remembrance of our native land, we forget not that in which our happy lot is cast. We exult in the reflection that though we count by thousands the miles which separate us from our birth-place, still our country is the same. We are no exiles meeting upon the banks of a foreign river, to swell its waters with our home-sick tears. Here floats the same banner which rustled above our boyish heads, except that its mighty folds are wider and its glittering stars increased in number.

The sons of New England are found in every State of the broad Republic. In the East, the South, and the unbounded West, their blood mingles freely with every kindred current. We have but changed our chamber in the paternal mansion; in all its rooms we are at home, and all who inhabit it are our brothers. To us the Union has but one domestic hearth; its household gods are all the same. Upon us, then, peculiarly devolves the duty of feeding the fires upon that kindly hearth; of guarding with pious care those sacred household gods.

We cannot do with less than the whole Union; to us it admits of no division. In the veins of our children flows Northern and Southern blood; how shall it be separated; who shall put asunder the best affections of the heart, the noblest instincts of our

nature? We love the land of our adoption, so do we that of our birth. Let us ever be true to both; and always exert ourselves in maintaining the unity of our country, the integrity of the Republic.

Accursed, then, be the hand put forth to loosen the golden cord of Union; thrice accursed the traitorous lips, whether of Northern fanatic or Southern demagogue, which shall propose its severance. But no! the Union cannot be dissolved; its fortunes are too brilliant to be marred; its destinies too powerful to be resisted. Here will be their greatest triumph, their most mighty development. And when, a century hence, this Crescent City shall have filled her golden horns; when within her broad-armed port shall be gathered the products of the industry of a hundred millions of freemen; when galleries of art and halls of learning shall have made classic this mart of trade; then may the sons of the Pilgrims, still wandering from the bleak hills of the North, stand upon the banks of the Great River, and exclaim with mingled pride and wonder, Lo! this is our country: when did the world ever witness so rich and magnificent a City—so great and glorious a Republic!

The following letter shows how little his own heavy cares and pecuniary pressure weakened his kindly sympathies for others. The allusion to California is noteworthy. He little thought that in three or four years fifty thousand "men of sense" would have gone there, and two of them be returning to take their seats in the National Senate!

TO HIS BROTHER S., IN MISSOURI.

NEW ORLEANS, *Feb.* 9, 1846.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I have just received your letter of the 25th ult., and hasten to answer it. I regret to hear of the probable want of success in your search for ore, and consequent loss of your time, labor, and expense. I am sorry for it on your own account, though it is, after all, a matter of but little importance. You

have honestly devoted more than a year's hard work to a business which has proved unsuccessful. You have been in *bad* luck instead of *good*. Well, what of it? Your only serious loss is the time. Try something else, and perhaps you will have better luck next time. You must not, my dear brother, let this failure discourage you. You have seen worse times than this. It is not half as bad as when your ship went to the bottom, and left you in an open boat in the middle of the ocean.

When you get through your experiment in mining, come down and see me. I have very little doubt I can get you into some good business here. Though I have no means, I have friends and influence. Come and stay with me till you can make the trial, at all events. I am keeping house here, and shall be delighted to have you come and stay with me as long as you please. It will add no burden or expense to me; and my family will be pleased to have you with them. This is the best point, at all events, to start from, even if you go elsewhere. As for Oregon and California, no man of sense would go to either, till compelled to do so. They are always open and wide enough, in case a man can't get a living in any other place.

Abby is with us, and I enclose a letter from her, which will tell you how she does. By the last we got from home they were all well. Let me hear from you as soon as you get this; and do not fail to come down here, when you get through with Missouri. Keep up your spirits, and some time or other, I do not doubt, your exertions will be successful.

Your affectionate brother,

S. S. Prentiss.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

New Orleans, *April* 6, 1846.

My Dear Brother:—

* * * * This has been the most embarrassing period of my life in financial matters; still I have managed so far to get along. My business is every day increasing, and will soon begin to yield a regular income. I consider my prospects

even better than I anticipated; and have no doubt that after the first year, I shall find my profession worth at least $10,000 per annum. I have already business which will yield $5,000 or $6,000; though, as I said before, most of the fees are not yet quite ripe; but they will all come in good time, no doubt. I believe I have got through the worst of it, and look forward for better times.

We have had a terrible winter. I never knew so much inclement weather in one season. It has been raining now for four or five days. My health has not been as good during the winter as usual. I have suffered severely from inflammatory cold; but I am now much better. Mary and the children are quite well, and dear Abby as well as we could expect; though she suffers much from her cough. I think as soon as we get fairly into our spring months, she will improve rapidly. She is certainly a great deal better than when she arrived.

How delighted we should all be, if we could see you and dear L. to night! I long to pop in upon you at New Bedford, and surprise you in your parochial labors. It is with the deepest regret that I am compelled to abandon the idea of paying you all a visit this summer; but it is out of the question for me to go, and Mary says she won't go without me. Abby and Mary write so often, that I shall not attempt to tell you any news; so, with much love to my dear sister, I am

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS YOUNGER SISTER.

LONGWOOD, near Natchez, *Aug.* 20, 1846.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

Notwithstanding I have pretty much surrendered to Mary all my old correspondence, yet I cannot refrain from enjoying, occasionally, this great pleasure of communing directly with those I love. I came up from New Orleans the first of the week, quite sick. I had an attack of fever and ague; and in consequence of neglect, it became troublesome. As soon as I got here, however, I went to bed, and took heavy doses of

quinine, which soon routed the fever. I am now quite well again, except great debility, but this will, I trust, soon follow the fever. New Orleans has been entirely healthy so far; but is one of the most unpleasant places to dwell in during the summer on the whole Continent. It is excessively warm, so damp that you seem all the time in a steam-bath, and for rare odors, it excels the famous city of Cologne. The fresh air and green trees of Longwood have revived me amazingly both in body and mind. I was delighted to rejoin Mary and the children whom I found much improved, especially the latter. The little rascals are as fat as they can be, and talk, and play, from morning till night. Geordie talks now almost as well as Jeanie. They are both very fond of me, and with the help of an occasional bribe in the shape of candy, I quite divide with their mother the empire over them. Dear little things, they are a source of infinite happiness, and I do not know how I should live without them. When a house has once been brightened by the presence of children, how desolate and gloomy it must seem without them. I am delighted to hear such glowing accounts, from all quarters, of my little namesake, who, I learn, grows rapidly, both in stature and in grace. Poor little fellow, I regret to learn he has suffered so much sickness, and trust he will soon outgrow it. Abby writes that he resembles Geordie somewhat. G. is as bluff, frank, fine a specimen of the Anglo-Saxon race as you will find in ten States. I would give anything in the world to see my little namesake, indeed to see you all. It has been a terrible disappointment both to Mary and myself, that we cannot visit Portland this summer. However, I shall continue to hope until our wishes are accomplished.

Abby writes us from New Bedford that the doctor attributes her cough to a disease of her throat, and not consumption. God grant it may be so, for then we can entertain some reasonable hopes of her speedy recovery. * * * For myself, I have, of course, a pretty hard time of it the first year in a new place, which was no more than I expected. But my professional prospects are excellent, and, if my health is preserved, I have not the slightest doubt of being able, in a very few years, to restore

my fortunes. Write me occasionally, my dear Anna, for I cannot bear to give up your correspondence entirely, though I know your letters to Mary are the same thing. Kiss little Seargent, and tell him his uncle loves him very much. Mrs. Williams and all the rest join me in remembrance to Mr. S., and oceans of love to you.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

It must be a very young reader of this memoir who has forgotten the grand outburst of American sympathy and beneficence, early in 1847, caused by the great famine in Ireland. Among the innumerable public meetings called all over the country, in aid of the starving Irish, one of the earliest was held by the citizens of New Orleans. It was presided over by the Governor of the State, and was first addressed by Henry Clay, then on a visit to the Southwest. Mr. Prentiss next spoke. The following is a brief report of his address :

FELLOW CITIZENS:—

It is no ordinary cause which has brought together this vast assemblage on the present occasion. We have met, not to prepare ourselves for political contests, nor to celebrate the achievements of those gallant men who have planted our victorious standards in the heart of an enemy's country. We have assembled, not to respond to shouts of triumph from the West, but to answer the cry of want and suffering which comes from the East. The Old World stretches out her arms to the New. The starving parent supplicates the young and vigorous child for bread. There lies upon the other side of the wide Atlantic a beautiful island, famous in story and in song. Its area is not so great as that of the State of Louisiana, while its population is almost half that of the Union. It has given to the world more than its share of genius and of greatness. It has been prolific in statesmen, warriors, and poets. Its brave and generous sons

have fought successfully all battles but their own. In wit and humor it has no equal; while its harp, like its history, moves to tears by its sweet but melancholy pathos. Into this fair region, God has seen fit to send the most terrible of all those fearful ministers who fulfill His inscrutable decrees. The earth has failed to yield her increase; the common mother has forgotten her offspring, and her breast no longer affords them their accustomed nourishment. Famine, gaunt and ghastly famine, has seized a nation with its strangling grasp; and unhappy Ireland, in the sad woes of the present, forgets for a moment the gloomy history of the past. We have assembled, fellow citizens, to express our sincere sympathy for the sufferings of our brethren, and to unite in efforts for their alleviation. This is one of those cases in which we may, without impiety, assume, as it were, the function of Providence. Who knows but what one of the very objects of this great calamity is to test the benevolence and worthiness of us upon whom unlimited abundance has been showered. In the name, then, of common humanity, I invoke your aid in behalf of starving Ireland. He who is able, and will not give for such a sacred purpose, is not a man, and has no right to wear the form. He should be sent back to nature's mint, and re-issued as a counterfeit on humanity of nature's baser metal.

Oh! it is terrible, that in this beautiful world, which the good God has given us, and in which there is plenty for us all, men should die of starvation! In these days, when improvements in agriculture and the mechanical arts have quadrupled the productiveness of labor; when it is manifest that the earth produces every year more than sufficient to clothe and feed all her thronging millions; it is a shame and a disgrace, that the word starvation has not long since become obsolete, or only retained to explain the dim legends of a barbarous age. You who have never been beyond the precincts of our own favored country; you, more especially, who have always lived in this great valley of the Mississippi—the cornucopia of the world—who see each day poured into the lap of your city, food sufficient to assuage the hunger of a nation, can form but an imperfect

idea of the horrors of famine; of the terror which strikes men's souls when they cry in vain for bread. When a man dies of disease, he alone endures the pain. Around his pillow are gathered sympathising friends, who, if they cannot keep back the deadly messenger, cover his face and conceal the horrors of his visage, as he delivers his stern mandate.

In battle, in the fullness of his pride and strength, little recks the soldier whether the hissing bullet sing his sudden requiem, or the cords of life are severed by the sharp steel. But he who dies of hunger wrestles alone, day after day, with his grim and unrelenting enemy. He has no friends to cheer him in the terrible conflict; for if he had friends, how could he die of hunger? He has not the hot blood of the soldier to maintain him; for his foe, vampire-like, has exhausted his veins. Famine comes not up like a brave enemy, storming, by a sudden onset, the fortress that resists. Famine besieges. He draws his lines around the doomed garrison; he cuts off all supplies; he never summons to surrender, for he gives no quarter. Alas! for poor human nature, how can it sustain this fearful warfare? Day by day the blood recedes; the flesh deserts; the muscles relax, and the sinews grow powerless. At last the mind, which at first had bravely nerved itself for the contest, gives way under the mysterious influences that govern its union with the body. Then he begins to doubt the existence of an overruling Providence; he hates his fellow men, and glares upon them with the longings of a cannibal, and, it may be, dies blaspheming!

Who will hesitate to give his mite to avert such awful results? Surely not you, citizens of New Orleans, ever famed for your deeds of benevolence and charity. Freely have your hearts and purses opened, heretofore, to the call of suffering humanity. Nobly did you respond to oppressed Greece and struggling Poland. Within Erin's borders is an enemy more cruel than the Turk; more tyrannical than the Russian. Bread is the only weapon that can conquer him. Let us, then, load ships with this glorious munition, and, in the name of our common humanity, wage war against this despot Famine. Let us, in God's name, "cast our bread upon the waters," and if we are selfish

enough to desire it, we may recollect the promise, that it shall return to us after many days.

If benevolence be not a sufficient incentive to action, we should be generous from common decency; for out of this famine we are adding millions to our fortunes. Every article of food, of which we have a superabundance, has been doubled in value, by the very distress we are now called upon to alleviate.

We cannot do less, in common honesty, than to divide among the starving poor of Ireland a portion of the gains we are making out of their misfortunes. Give, then, generously and freely. Recollect that, in so doing, you are exercising one of the most god-like qualities of your nature, and, at the same time, enjoying one of the greatest luxuries of life. We ought to thank our Maker that he has permitted us to exercise, equally with Himself, that noblest of even the Divine attributes, benevolence. Go home and look at your family, smiling in rosy health, and then think of the pale, famine-pinched cheeks of the poor children of Ireland; and I know you will give according to your store, even as a bountiful Providence has given to you—not grudgingly, but with an open hand; for the quality of benevolence, like that of mercy,

> "Is not strained,
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven,
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed,
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." *

Mr. Prentiss was just at this time in a no unfitting mood to make such a touching appeal. He was expecting, every moment to hear of the death of his eldest sister.†

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* I omit the closing and, as it was delivered, most beautiful portion of the address, as it is entirely spoilt by the reporter, who, Mr. P. naively observed to me, "doubtless knew much better than himself what he meant to say."

† Abby Lewis Prentiss died on Saturday, the 30th of January, 1847, at the age of thirty-two. Long and wearisome sufferings, such as usually attend pulmonary disease, preceded the final struggle. It was towards the close of a stormy winter's

The sad intelligence arrived a few days after; and the following letters give some, though but a faint, conception of its effect upon him. It was the first death that had occurred in the family, since that of his father.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *Feb.* 11, 1847.

MY DEAR, BELOVED MOTHER:—

My heart bleeds to the core, as I sit down to mingle my tears with yours, at the terrible misfortune which has befallen us. We have just received George's letter, informing us of the sad event; which, however, we had for some time been anticipating. Still, though I thought I was prepared for it, I cannot realize that it is all over, that I shall never again, in this world, see our dear, dear Abby; so good, so affectionate, so resigned. She was the best of us all, and gladly would I have given my own life to preserve hers. But we have consolation, even in our extreme grief; for she was so good, that we know she is now in Heaven, and freed from all care, unless it be that her affectionate heart is still troubled for us, whom she loved so well. We can dwell with satisfaction, after we have overcome the first sharpness of our grief, upon her angel-like qualities, which made her, long before she died, fit for the Heaven where she now is. But what shall I say to you, my *dearest* mother? How shall I express the deep sympathy I feel for your loss, and your sorrow? All I can say is, that I partake of both. You have lost the purest, noblest, and best of daughters;

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day, that she gently "*fell asleep*." A little while before, she had imagined herself in a "very beautiful region," which her tongue in vain attempted to describe, surrounded by those she loved. Among her last half-conscious utterances, was the name of her brother Seargent. The next morning witnessed a scene of such glorious beauty and loveliness as made the presence of Death seem almost incredible. The snow, and mist, and gloom had ceased; and as the sun rose, clear and resplendent, every visible object—the earth, trees, houses—shone as if enamelled with gold and pearls and precious stones. It was the Lord's day; and well did the aspect of Nature symbolize Him who is "*the Resurrection and the Life.*"

I, a sister, who never, to my knowledge, did a selfish act, or uttered a selfish thought. We will weep together then, my dear mother, and when our tears shall be dried, we will remember the virtues of our dear departed one, and find consolation even in our grief. You, my dear mother, must remember, too, that you have children still spared to you, who love you with all their hearts, and who will strive, if possible, by increased affection, to make amends for the loss they cannot supply; and not only children, but grandchildren, who, though they have never seen, know and love you, as if they had always lived with you. Jeanie and Geordie speak of you every day, talk to your portrait, and love you as dearly as they do me. I know then, my dear mother, you will gather consolation, both in thinking of the goodness and virtues of the dear one who is gone, and of the affection and devotion of those who remain. No children on earth ever loved a mother more than yours love you. If it be possible for me next summer, I will bring on Mary and the children to see you. I almost entertain the hope of being able to persuade you to come and live with us. Mary and I would be so delighted, and then it would be everything for the dear children. But I cannot write more now. I will write again shortly. God bless you my dear mother, and give you strength to bear up under this great affliction.

Your affectionate, and devoted son,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

NEW ORLEANS, *Feb.* 12, 1847.

MY DEAREST SISTER: —

I received yesterday George's letter, giving us the melancholy information of the death of our beloved sister. Though we have been for some time anticipating this sad news, still I was unprepared for it, and my heart is overwhelmed with grief. I cannot bring my mind to realize the terrible truth, that I shall never again in this world see our dear Abby, or be able to offer her any more tokens of my affection. Oh! she was so good, so pure, so unselfish, so needed in this world, that

it seems very hard she should have been taken from us. But I do not doubt it is better for the dear one herself, for she is in Heaven, beyond the reach of pain or care; and is even now looking back with pity and affectionate compassion upon our sufferings. How sweetly shall we cherish her memory! It is a melancholy pleasure to recollect that we have always lived together in the bonds of love and affection. Never do I remember an unkind word or thought between dear Abby and any of us. We can meditate upon her virtues, and her sweet unspotted life, without a pang of regret. And after all, my dear sister, she has only commenced her journey a few days before us. We shall soon travel the same road; would to God, we were all as well prepared. Indeed it is for the living and not for the dead, that we have cause to grieve. Alas! for dear mother, my heart bleeds for her, and I weep for her, more than for the dear one, who has gone to be an angel. What will poor mother do in her now desolate house? May a kind Providence support her in this great affliction. Mary and I both wrote to her yesterday. Mary also wrote to you, but I was too much indisposed to do so. I shall try and persuade mother to come and live with me. We are all well, though I have suffered a good deal from colds. My heart is too full to write more. I will write again ere long. All join in affectionate remembrance to you and Mr. S. God bless you, my dearest sister.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *March* 16, 1847.

MY DEAREST MOTHER:—

I WROTE you about a month since, I hardly know what, for my heart was full of grief. We had just received the sad news of the departure of our dear beloved Abby. It was the severest blow I have ever experienced. I knew not before how much I loved her—how worthy she was of love. I do believe she was the kindest, the noblest, the most unselfish being that could be found in the whole world. I cannot yet bring

myself to realize the truth. I cannot bear to think I shall never again see her pure, mild face, or listen to her sweet and affectionate voice. But one thing we are sure of, my dear, dear mother; wherever the good go in the next world, there she has gone. It required but little change to make an angel of her. It is not for her I grieve, but for ourselves, and most of all, for you, my dear, good, revered mother. You will suffer most from this dispensation of Providence. All the rest of us had left you; poor Abby alone remained to comfort and support you. Why could not the blow have fallen elsewhere—upon me. But God's will be done. He has chosen dear Abby from the flock; and surely none was fitter for the sacrifice. I should have written again before this, but I have not been well, and have put it off from day to day. Mary wrote a few days since. She feels the loss as deeply as any of us. She loved Abby most dearly and sincerely; and she loves you, too, my dear mother, as sincerely as if she were your own daughter.

We have both set our hearts upon your coming to live with us. We have three sweet children, two of whom already know their grandmamma at Portland, as well as they do their mother. For the present I will suggest no plans, nor say anything further on the subject. But you must reflect upon it, and make up your mind to come and live with your children and grand-children. I think it will make you young again, to have the little ones climbing into your lap, and listening to your affectionate instructions. My business is increasing, and my prospects are most cheering. Mary and the children are very well, and join me in the most affectionate love and regard.

Your devoted and affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

TO THE SAME.

NEW ORLEANS, *April* 24, 1847.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I HAVE intended writing for a week past, but have put it off, hoping to hear from you first. It has been some time

since we got a letter from either George or Anna; but I will not wait any longer. I was very glad that you went down to Newburyport, and was with A. during her illness. It must have been a relief to you, and a great comfort to her. You do not know, my dear mother, how much my heart yearns towards you during these sad times; how I long to be with you, and to try and comfort you by dividing with you your grief. I know, however, that you have sources of comfort and consolation far superior to any human sympathy; and I trust, even now, that you can look upon the departure of our dearest and most beloved one with calmness and resignation, and feel that, in truth, what is our loss is her gain. With the exception of yourself, dear mother, she was, of all our family circle, the ripest for heaven, the best prepared to enter her Father's mansion. Our grief, then, is not for her, but for ourselves; and you, most of all, dear mother, must miss her, and feel her loss. Well, you must let your children, who remain, and who all love and venerate you beyond any other human being, strive, in some degree, to supply your loss. I shall, if no accident prevents, come on to Portland in July, when we will consider what will be most agreeable to you, and most conducive to your future comfort and happiness; and whatever that may be, it must be done. I regret that I cannot bring Mary and the children with me. I should be so proud to show them to you. I cannot tell exactly when I shall start. It will depend somewhat on my business, but it will be some time in July, and I shall take the quickest route, as my only object in making the journey is to see you. I got a letter some time ago from S. He is still at his mining business, and writes in much better spirits than before. He seems to think that he will succeed in realizing something out of his labors. Mary and the children are in most excellent health, and I am better than I have been through the winter. Little Seargent is a perfect pattern of health, beauty and good behavior. I have almost a notion of packing him in my trunk and bringing him with me, I wish so much for you to see him. We have had a visit from Mrs. Williams, who stayed with us several weeks; she returned about two weeks ago. I think Mary and the children will go

and stay with her, while I make my trip North. They join me in much love to you. Mary will write in a day or two. God bless and comfort you, my dear mother. So pray I every day.

Your affectionate and devoted son,

SEARGENT.

The demands of business and other causes rendered it impossible for him to visit the North. "It is," he writes to his mother, "one of the most painful disappointments of my life, I had anticipated so much sorrowful pleasure in the visit. I am so anxious to see you, to assure you of my love and affection; to sympathize with you in your loneliness since dear Abby became an angel. Indeed, my dear, dear mother, I feel it almost wicked not to come as I promised. But still I cannot do it. I am compelled to give it up. I shall spend the summer principally in the city."

But neither affliction, the pressure of business, nor pecuniary embarrassments prevented his being a most interested and thoughtful observer of public affairs. Although in common with his party generally, he strongly disapproved of the manner in which the country had been precipitated into a war with Mexico, he still considered it the part of patriotism to sustain our gallant army when the conflict had become unavoidable. Nor could he help admiring the brilliant achievements of the forces under General Taylor and General Scott. At a public reception of the volunteers who, returning from General Taylor's army, passed through New Orleans in June, 1847, he delivered the following address:

BRAVE VOLUNTEERS:—The people of New Orleans, filled with admiration for the patriotic and heroic achievements of our citizen soldiers, are desirous of expressing the sentiments of joy, pride and affection, with which they hail their return to the arms of a grateful country. I am their honored organ on the

occasion, and most warmly do I sympathize with their feelings, and participate in their wishes.

Welcome, then, gallant volunteers! ye war-worn soldiers, welcome home! The heart of Louisiana warms towards you. Welcome! thrice welcome from your glorious battle-fields! In the name of the citizens of New Orleans, I greet and embrace you all.

No longer do you tread upon a hostile shore, nor gaze upon foreign skies. Useless now are your sharp swords and unerring rifles. No lurking foe waylays you in the impenetrable chapparal, or among the gloomy gorges of the mountain. Henceforth your path will be ambushed only by friends. You will find them more difficult than the enemy to quell. They will pour upon you volleys of grape as you pass—not the grape whose iron clusters grew so luxuriantly on the hill-sides of Monterey, or along the ravines of Buena Vista, and whose juice was the red blood—but the grape which comes from the battery of the banquet!

A year has not elapsed since I saw most of you bivouacked on the old battle-field below the city, drawing inspiration from its mighty memories, and dreaming, perchance, of those great achievements which you were so soon to accomplish. Since then you have passed through all the vicissitudes of a soldier's life—the camp, the march, the battle, and the victory. You have played your parts nobly. You have gone far beyond your own promises or the country's expectations. You have borne, without a murmur, the ordinary hardships of military life—hunger, fatigue, and exposure. You blenched not when death came in the sad shape of disease, and struck down your comrades around you; you submitted cheerfully to discipline, and converted the raw material of individual bravery into the terrible, irresistible power of combined courage. But it was upon legitimate battle-fields you gathered those unfading laurels upon which your countrymen will ever gaze, as they do now, with grateful pride.

Our little army of regulars, as they well deserved to do, had already plucked the first fruits of the war. On the victorious fields of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma they sustained their own high character, and nobly illustrated American skill and

valor. They scourged the enemy from the Rio Grande; and then, reinforced by the volunteers, who flocked to their country's standard, their great captain meditated the conquest of the stronghold of Monterey. There, like an eagle on his eyrie, stood the mountain king. Thither the eyes of the nation turned in eager expectation. All hearts palpitated for the result. Now was our national prowess to be tested—now we were to ascertain whether we could cast back into the teeth of European generals and European diplomatists the taunts which they had heaped upon our citizen soldiers. They had told us that our Republic was weak, notwithstanding its great population and unbounded resources. They said we had no military strength; that our army and navy, though skillful and brave, were but a cypher compared with the mighty armaments of the Old World; and that our unpractised citizens could never make efficient soldiers. Soon came the ever-glorious storming of the mountain fastness, and the problem was solved. The nation's heart beat free; and joy for the present, confidence in the future, pervaded the land. Indeed it was a great and glorious achievement, and in its moral effect, both at home and abroad, perhaps the most important of the war. It gave the country complete confidence in the volunteers—the volunteers full reliance upon themselves. From that day forth they became veterans. Time will not permit me to recite the vivid and heart-stirring incidents of that memorable and wonderful conflict. On one side of the city, the regulars fought, as they always do, with skill, with bravery and success; they did all that was expected of them—their previous reputation rendered it impossible to do more. On the other side the volunteers drew their maiden swords. Never before had they experienced a grasp stronger than that of friendship; now they stretched forth their hands and grappled with death. On, on pressed these unfledged warriors—these men of civil life, these citizen soldiers: their bright blades flashed before them like tongues of flame. Up the hill-side, through the streets swept by the raking cannon, over barricade and battery, their advancing banners, streaming like thunder-clouds against the wind, rustled in the battle breeze like the pinions of an eagle

pouncing on his quarry. All know the glorious result. The enemy, though he fought bravely for his firesides and his altars, and in the midst of his supposed impregnable defences, shrunk from such fiery valor. The day was ours, and the Republic acknowledges its debt of gratitude to the gallant volunteers.

Welcome, then, thrice welcome, victors of Monterey!

But the fortune of the war determined that your conduct and valor should be tested upon a yet bloodier field. At Buena Vista you met, face to face, the Genius of the battle, even as he appeared to the Warrior Bard—

> "Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands,
> His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
> With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands
> And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon—
> Restless it rolls—now fixed—and now anon
> Flashing afar; and at his iron feet
> Destruction cowers, to mark what deeds are done."

Under that hot gaze, in the fierce conflict where desperate courage was put to its utmost proof, all fame unites in saying that you covered yourselves with immortal honor. In a pitched battle against brave and veteran troops, outnumbering you four to one, during two days you made successful contest—you stood a living dyke, and again and again poured upon you in vain the fiery torrent. "'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life" to have witnessed you repulsing the audacious squadrons of the enemy, as, with pennons flying, and serried lances, they came thundering upon your unflinching ranks. Often in the changing currents of the moody fight, when the fortune of the day, rent from our standard, fluttered like torn canvass in the gale, you seized and fastened it back in its proper place. But we should do injustice did we not remember on this occasion those glorious comrades without whose co-operation your valor would have proved in vain—I mean the artillery, those true sons of thunder, who on that day seemed to scorn to use Jove's counterfeits, and hurled his genuine bolts! Never were cannon served with greater coolness or more fatal precision. At each discharge, whole columns were cut down—

"Even as they fell, in files they lay,
Like the mower's grass at the close of day,
When his work is done on the level plain."

Honor, then, to your brave comrades! We wish they were here to share your welcome, heroes of Buena Vista.

But you have still another claim upon our regard—the love and confidence of your General. To have your names associated with his, is itself renown. He has achieved a world-wide fame. The whole nation looks upon him with admiration and affection, and twenty millions of people love and confide in him, and right well does the brave old man deserve these great honors. A true patriot, he has never obtruded himself upon the country: when his services were needed, then he rendered them. The nation knew not the treasure it possessed until the emergencies of the last year developed it. Now we know we have that gift of a century—a General cool, sagacious, prudent, brave, and humane; capacious in resources, simple in habits, modest in manners, and, above all, possessed of the rare capacity of infusing into those around him his own indomitable courage and determination. These are the qualities which have rendered General Taylor and his armies invincible. They are of the true old Roman sort—such as might have belonged to a consul in the best days of the Ancient Republic. It is no small honor to have fought under the eye and received the commendation of such a soldier. Welcome, then, thrice welcome! companions of the great captain in those wonderful engagements whose rapidity and brilliancy have astonished the world. Gentlemen, you have before you a proud and happy destiny. Yours have been no mercenary services. Prompted by patriotism alone, you went forth to fight the battles of your country. You now voluntarily return to the pursuits of civil life. Presently you will be engaged in your ancient occupations. But you will not be without the meet reward of patriotic service. Your neighbors will regard you with respect and affection. Your children will feel proud whenever they hear mention made of Monterey and Buena Vista, and a grateful nation has already inscribed your names upon its annals. Indeed, it is a noble sight, worthy of

the Genius of this great Republic, to behold, at the call of the country, whole armies leap forth in battle array; and then, when their services are no longer needed, fall quietly back and commingle again with the communities from whence they came. Thus the dark thunder-cloud, at nature's summons, marshals its black battalions and lowers in the horizon; but at length, its lightnings spent, its dread artillery silenced, its mission finished, disbanding its frowning ranks, it melts away into the blue ether, and the next morning you will find it glittering in the dew drops among the flowers, or assisting, with its kindly moisture, the growth of the young and tender plants.

Great and happy country, where every citizen can be at once turned into an effective soldier; every soldier converted forthwith into a peaceful citizen.

Our regular troops are unsurpassed for skill and courage. Led by their gallant and accomplished officers, they are invincible. All that science and valor can do, they have achieved. At Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo they have plucked new laurels worthy to be entwined among those gathered on the fields of Palo Alto and Resacâ de la Palma.

But it is their business to be brave; it is their profession to fight. We honor the army; but we look upon our citizen soldiers with a different and peculiar pride. They are part and parcel of ourselves. They have taught us the secret of our vast strength. We now know the mighty nerve and muscle of the Republic. We evoke armies as if by magic, rapidly as they came forth from the sowing of the dragon's teeth; at a nod, they disappear, as though the earth had swallowed them up. But they are not gone. You will find them in the forest, in the field, in the workshop, in the chambers of the sick, at the bar, in the councils of the country. They have returned to their old professions and pursuits. Let but the trumpet sound, and again they spring up, a crop of armed men. Proudly do we tell the world that we have, whenever occasion calls, two millions of warriors like those who stormed at Monterey, and conquered at Buena Vista. Welcome, then, citizen soldiers! Welcome soldier citizens!

But, alas! the joy of our greeting is mingled with sorrow. We gaze upon your thinned ranks, and seek in vain for many beloved and familiar faces. Why come they not from the battle-field? Why meet they not the embraces of their loving friends? A year ago I saw them march forth beneath their country's banner, full of lusty life, of buoyant hearts, and noble emulation. Where are they now? Where is brave McKee, impetuous Yell, intrepid Hardin, chivalrous Clay, and gallant Watson, with hundreds of their noble comrades, whom we meet not here? Ah! I see it all—your laurel wreaths are thickly entwined with cypress—the dead cannot come to the banquet! Alas! alas, for the noble dead! If we cannot welcome, we will weep for them. Our tears fall fast and free; but they flow rather for the living than the dead; for the nation that has lost such worthy sons; for the desolate fire-sides, bereaved of their cherished and loved ones; for the bowed father, the heart-broken mother, the sobbing sister, the frantic wife, and the wondering children. For them we weep, but not for the heroic dead. We envy their fate. Gloriously did they die, those who rendered up their souls in battle. They fulfilled the highest duty mankind owes to this world: they died for their country. They fell upon stricken fields, which their own valor had already half won. The earthquake voice of victory was in their ears, and their dying gaze was turned proudly upon the triumphant stars and stripes. Honor, eternal honor, to the brave who baptized their patriotism in their blood.

But there are others who equally claim a place in our sad remembrance. I mean those who died from disease; whose fiery hearts were extinguished in the dull camp or on the gloomy march. It is easy to die in battle. The spirit is stirred to a courageous madness by the rushing squadrons, the roaring cannon, and the clashing steel. All the fierce instincts of our nature are aroused, and the soldier seeks for death as the bride-groom seeks his bride. Besides

> "Fame is there to tell who bleeds,
> And Honor's eye on daring deeds."

But to waste away with sickness—to be crushed by the blows of an unseen enemy, with whom you cannot grapple; to know death is approaching slowly but surely; to feel that your name will occupy no place on the bright scroll of fame—thus, without any of the pride and rapture of the strife, to meet bravely the inevitable tyrant, is the highest test of the soldier's courage, the strongest proof of the patriot's devotion. Honor, then, immortal honor, to the brave who fell, not on the battle-field, but before the shafts of disease.

Gallant gentlemen, you will soon leave us for your respective homes. Everywhere fond and grateful hearts await you. You will have to run the gauntlet of friendship and affection. The bonfires are already kindling upon the hills. In every grove and pleasant arbor the feast is spread. Thousands of sparkling eyes are watching eagerly for your return. Tears will fill them when they seek in vain among your thinned ranks for many a loved and familiar face; but through those tears will shine the smiles of joy and welcome, even as the rays of the morning sun glitter through the dew-drops which the sad night hath wept.

Again, in the name of the citizens of New Orleans, I bid you welcome. When you leave us, you will carry with you our admiration, our gratitude, and our affection.

Mr. Prentiss was, however, by no means blind, as an extract from one of his letters, written about this time, will show, to the political evils which were likely to spring out of the Mexican war. How far his fears have been verified, the reader can judge.

Before you get this, you will have heard of General Scott's new victory over the Mexicans. I pity the poor devils, they defend their country so miserably. It is certain that the Anglo-Saxon is a warlike race; but I fear serious evils will result from this successful development of its military instincts. Indeed, the evils are already obvious. The toga gives place to the sword. Forty years of civil service in the councils of the nation are held as naught, when compared with a few weeks or

months of successful generalship. What a spawn of prosperous demagogues will crawl out of the ooze of these subsiding armies! From a corporal to a general, they will claim all the honors and offices of the government. I admire the character of General Taylor as much as any man; but I have great contempt for the giddiness of the people, who wish to make him President for no other reason than that of his being a successful warrior. I presume he is the best specimen of a general to be found; but to put aside all the statesmen of the country for the purpose of placing him in an office, in which his military capacity can be of no service, is worse than ridiculous. However, I feel but little interest in politics, now-a-days, and care but little what the silly sovereigns do.

TO HIS SISTER ANNA.

LONGWOOD, *September* 5, 1847.

MY DEAR SISTER:

I believe my neglect is past apologizing for; and I shall not, therefore, attempt any useless excuses. The fact is, I have an increasing horror of writing, and can hardly bring myself to the most necessary correspondence. I avoid or postpone it till I get perfectly ashamed of myself. Fortunately, Mary makes up in some degree for my deficiencies. I have been here about three weeks, driven from New Orleans by the yellow fever, which is now raging there with fatal violence. It seems to be now at its worst, and probably never prevailed to so great an extent. This has interfered a good deal with my plans, as I had intended spending most of the summer in the city. Mary and the children came up about the middle of July. It was fortunate they did. Mary had half determined to stay there, too, so that the children might become acclimated. It turns out that the fever prevails with peculiar virulence in the vicinity of our residence. Two of the servants left there have already had it, but fortunately recovered. Of course, I shall not go down until it subsides, which, I hope, will be soon: for I am anxious to get back to my labors. True, I am enjoying myself here, but it is too easy a life for me.

Longwood is a sweet, quiet place, and we are all enjoying excellent health. The children have improved wonderfully, and are as healthy as they can possibly be. When we left the city, they all looked pale; but now their faces are brown and rosy, and they are as wild as so many little deer. Seargy looks like a young prince. Geordie puts me in mind every day of grandfather Lewis, and has the same vivacity and quickness for which he was so remarkable. I have no doubt, if you were to see him, you would recognize him at once from his Lewis look. How delighted I should be to see my little namesake at Newburyport. I expect you and Mary would have quite a battle upon the relative merits of the two Seargents. Well, perhaps, next year, we may be able to make the comparison. I don't promise, but I hope it may be the case. I suppose, by this time, matters are all arranged in Portland. How delightful it will be for you to have mother living near you, where you will see each other two or three times every day. She must get a house as near yours as possible. As soon as anything is done, you must write me all about it. I am anxious to see mother fairly settled down again, as I know her mind will be disturbed until her new arrangements are completed. There is nothing new here. Natchez is as dull as a deserted village. Most of the fashionables are at the North. We all went out to Arlington the other evening to a party given to Mary by Mrs. B——. Mary, Mrs. Williams, and all the family join in much love to you, Mr. S., and the dear little ones.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

LONGWOOD, *September* 24, 1847.

MY DEAR MOTHER:

We are still staying here at Longwood, waiting for it to become healthy again in New Orleans. I am getting tired of the delay, and feel very anxious to get back to my business. I have lost now about two months doing nothing. It is hard to

say when we will be able to go down. The number of deaths has abated greatly, more than one-half; but this, I fear, arises, not from any diminution of the disease, but from want of subjects. I presume it will not be safe to go before the middle, perhaps, the last of October. I shall certainly not take my family down, till all danger is over. It has been an awful epidemic; the worst that New Orleans ever experienced. There has been no sickness here or in Natchez, and we have all enjoyed remarkably good health; the children especially are the heartiest little things you ever saw. Their staying here this summer has been of infinite service to them. I wish you could see them playing together. They are very fond of each other, and Jeanie and Geordie perfectly dote on Seargy. They are all, too, very fond of me—especially Geordie. They say he is my favorite; but I love them all so well, that I hardly feel that I have any preference. I hope that your new arrangements will be all made before the cold weather. I am anxious to know whether you will spend the winter in Newburyport or New Bedford. Perhaps another year I can persuade you to spend the winter with us in New Orleans. I hope these changes will all prove agreeable to you, and that you will find no cause to regret removing from Portland. I expect, however, you will miss it a good deal at first, for it is a beautiful place, and associated with many pleasant memories to all our family.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

New Orleans, *November* 6, 1847.

My Dear Brother:

I have been in the city for ten days or more. I did not, however, bring Mary and the children with me. They are still at Longwood, and I shall not be able to go after them for a week or ten days more. I have rented a new house nearer my office, but it is not quite finished, and I shall not bring them down until they can go into it. I hear from them, however, every day or two. They are in most excellent health, as they

have been, indeed, all summer. This city is perfectly healthy, and one can hardly realize, in looking at the busy crowds, which throng the streets, that a month ago it was literally a city of the dead. It is truly wonderful; not the slightest trace of the terrible epidemic is visible, nor does its remembrance seem to remain upon the mind of any one. I was delighted to hear of mother's removal, so safely and speedily to her new home. * *

* * I long to see her, more than I can express, and especially do I desire that she see Mary and the children. My business prospects are very good, though not much is yet doing in professional way. I think I stand upon an equality with any of the bar in this city, and I do not doubt my business will increase. I have just been complimented by the solicitations of the principal members of the bar, and all the other professors, that I should take a professorship in the faculty of Law in the University of this State, rendered vacant by the death of Mr. Wilde. I have, however, declined acceding to their wishes, inasmuch as the preparation of lectures would take too much time from my regular professional business. The department they wish to assign me, embraces lectures upon International Law and Equity. I took the matter as quite flattering, considering the short period of my residence in the city.

December 8, 1847.

I brought Mary and the children down from Longwood about a fortnight ago, expecting the new house, I had rented, would be ready for us. Such, however, was not the case. We had to go to the hotel for a week. We then came into the house, before it was finished, and I have ever since been in jeopardy, among piles of disorganized furniture, and rolls of entangled and treacherous carpets. My whole energies have been directed to a practical application of the old maxim, "*in medio tutissimus.*" Mary, however, has presided serenely over chaos, and the discordant elements of housekeeping are at length obedient to the law of order, and have crystallized into their appropriate forms. We are much more pleasantly situated

than we have been heretofore. Our house is built in modern style, and is very comfortable. It is situated on Dauphine street, about two squares below Canal, is within four squares of my office, and about six of the court. We are all in excellent health, especially the children. I shall make a desperate effort this winter, to lay up money enough to bring them all north next summer. I wish mother to see them before they outgrow their present graces. They are a source of wondrous happiness to me, and to each other; for they are exceedingly affectionate; a quality I esteem in children above any other. I am delighted to hear that your little one is getting on so finely, and that she has already developed her carnivorous capacity, by cutting two teeth. Let us hear from you often this winter.

CHAPTER XXV.

New Year's Letter to his Mother—Difficulty with a Grandson of Henry Clay—His Account of the Affair—Reminiscences of it by Balie Peyton and Richard T. Archer—Letter from Mr. Clay—State of the Country early in 1848—Questions growing out of the Mexican War—Mr. Prentiss' Speech at a Meeting to nominate Delegates to the Whig National Convention—His Exertions during the Canvass—Views of Slavery and the Wilmot Proviso—Gen. Taylor—Letters.

ÆT 39. 1848.

HERE is his New Year's letter to his mother :

NEW ORLEANS, *January* 1, 1848.

MY DEAR MOTHER :

Again it becomes my pleasant duty to wish you a happy New Year, which I do most truly and affectionately. I trust it will pass with you happily and brightly, and free from the clouds and troubles of the past year. Notwithstanding the irreparable loss we have experienced in the death of our dear, beloved Abby, still we have much to be thankful for, and I hope many happy days are in store for you. God grant that you may live to see your grandchildren and great grandchildren grow up around you and call you blessed, even as your own children love to do. Dear Abby is now a saint in heaven, and the memory of her virtues and goodness assuages our grief at her departure. I wish we could see you to-day; how grateful it would be to our feelings to tender our congratulations in person, to kiss you with filial affection, and to present our dear little one for your blessing. But we are with you in feeling, if we cannot be in person. Mary has already written you, and the children would write too if they knew how. I would give a great deal if you could see them, they are so healthy, so intelligent, and so pretty; and then

they love their grandma' Prentiss as much as if they had known her ever since they were born. They talk about you every day; at least Jeanie and Geordie do; little Seargy, of course, cannot talk yet, though he tries very hard, and makes a kind of gibberish, which may be very good sense if one could only understand it. He walks quite well, but is so impetuous that we have to watch him all the time, or he would break his neck. He is altogether the most energetic child I ever saw, and must be much like his dear little namesake at Newburyport. We are all perfectly well, except from colds, by which I have suffered a good deal. I am now, however, nearly well. We had to dine with us on Christmas day, Capt. Davis, Col. Peabody, and Mr. D. of Portland. We are all going to dine on board the ship some day next week; the children are delighted with the idea. Tell Anna, I wish her and her sweet children and good husband, a happy new year; and I hope before it is through to see you all. God bless you, my dear mother, and protect you always.

Your affectionate son,

SEARGENT.

In the early part of 1848, a very painful affair occurred between Mr. Prentiss and a grandson of Mr. Clay. Justice to his memory seems to require some reference to this affair, and I make it the more readily, as it affords a fresh opportunity of testifying against the dreadful custom of duelling.

The whole matter is thus explained in a letter written after its adjustment:

NEW ORLEANS, *February* 29, 1848.

DEAR GEORGE:—

I wrote you a week ago a hurried note, promising therein to write again in a day or two. I have not been very well, and have been very busy, so that I could not fulfill my promise at an earlier moment. I told you I had been involved in a personal difficulty, which was, however, settled amicably. As you may see it noticed in some of the newspapers, I will explain the circumstances out of which it arose, as well as those

under which it was adjusted. Some six weeks ago, I found it necessary, in the conduct of a cause in which I was retained, to animadvert, in the strongest manner, upon the conduct of Mr. James E——, a son-in-law of Mr. Clay. * * * * * Knowing at the time the severity of my remarks, I stated in my argument (perhaps imprudently) that I held myself personally responsible for what I said. I alluded of course to Mr. E——, who was in the city, and present during a portion of the trial. The court sustained me, and decided the case in my favor without hesitation. One of the city papers, very improperly, had given a professed synopsis of my argument, embracing only the vituperative portion, and that in a garbled and exaggerated form. Shortly after, I understood that some of E——'s connections had determined to raise a quarrel with me, and about three or four weeks ago, his eldest son (and a very clever fellow he turned out to be) came down from Kentucky and challenged me. As he was a young man, I should have declined at once; but he put it on the ground that his father was unable to attend to matters of that sort, and that he had a right to assume his quarrel. I hesitated still; but, upon reflection, I came to the conclusion that I ought to accept. Of course, I had not the most remote idea that his father was not capable of attending to his own affairs, until I received the information as I have just stated. I appreciated, too, the young man's feelings, and could not much blame him. * * * * I was also convinced that, if I declined the challenge, a street fight would probably ensue, as well as other difficulties, in which my friends would be involved; and I believed that it was the cheapest mode of disposing of the affair, to accept the call. The challenge was *peremptory*, and left me no chance for explanations, and no alternative but to fight or back out. Taking into view my position here; my previous course in similar matters; the perfect dependence of my family upon my personal exertions; and of those exertions upon my personal character and standing in this region, I determined to accept, and did accept, the challenge. I postponed a meeting, however, for two weeks, both for the purpose of arranging my business, and with a hope that the matter

might be arranged. My wish was gratified; by the interposition of some gentlemen of high character and standing, the challenge was withdrawn, and the matter referred to two gentlemen, whose decision was doubtless very proper, and, I believe, has given general satisfaction to all parties. I enclose you the card, showing how it was settled.* You will, of course, consider my conduct very rash, and perhaps inexcusable, in accepting a challenge at all, in my present situation. I viewed the matter, however, according to my best judgment, without passion, ill-feeling, or prejudice; and it was my solemn belief that the welfare of

* The following is the substance of the card:

"The difficulty between Mr. PRENTISS and Mr. E——, having been referred to us by their respective friends for settlement, we are of opinion that Mr. PRENTISS travelled out of the record, in the use of the offensive expressions complained of. It is, therefore, the duty of Mr. PRENTISS, cheerfully, frankly, and fully to retract the offensive expressions, to which Mr. E—— has taken exception.

B. F. HARNEY,
E. WARREN MOISE.

Pass Christian, February 18, 1848.

On the part of Mr. PRENTISS we agree to the above award, and retract the offensive expressions.

BALIE PEYTON,
A. C. BULLITT.

It is alike a duty and a pleasure to make public the following letter from Mr. PRENTISS to Mr. Johnson, written after the settlement.

B. F. H.
E. W. M.

PASS CHRISTIAN, *February* 18, 1848.

ROBERT JOHNSON, ESQ.,

Dear Sir:—I am sincerely gratified that the difficulty between Mr. H. C. E—— and myself has been amicably adjusted. From the beginning of this affair, I have not entertained an unkind feeling toward Mr. H. C. E——. On the contrary, I honor and appreciate the sentiments by which he has been actuated, and under similar circumstances, should probably have acted as he has done.

I can now say frankly, what might heretofore have been attributed to improper motives: I disclaim all personal or improper feelings in the matter out of which this controversy arose, as well as all knowledge or approval of the newspaper publications in relation to my remarks. I respond fully to the high and honorable sentiments, which have marked your course in this matter, as well as that of your associates, and it gives me pleasure to acknowledge the same.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. S. PRENTISS.

my family, and my duty towards them as well as myself, admitted no other course. I acted solely from a sense of duty, and though the result might have been disastrous, I am rejoiced to find that it has really been fortunate, and will, in all probability, relieve me in future from any similar difficulties. I think my course has been generally approved.

Col. Peyton, referring to this matter, writes :

Mr. Prentiss' patience and magnanimity, were most severely tested in this affair. It cannot be denied, that in arguing the case, out of which the difficulty arose, a case of alleged fraud, and involving, therefore, to some extent, personal character, he was carried, by the ardor of his feelings, somewhat beyond the evidence. What he said was seized on by a newsmonger, and published in the papers in a most offensive and exaggerated light.

Mr. Prentiss having called on me to act as his friend, I advised him to decline the challenge on the ground that what he said was in the discharge of a professional duty, &c., &c. Failing to satisfy him, I, at length, persuaded him to postpone action, consider the matter that night, and give me his determination the next morning. When the morning came, he decided to accept the call, saying he could not deny the right of a son to take up his father's quarrel without regard to its merits. At my request he associated with me Mr. Bullitt, of the *New Orleans Picayune*, who, from his intimate personal relations with some of the other party, I was confident would prove a powerful auxiliary in the object nearest my heart—an amicable settlement of the affair. This object, not without the greatest difficulty, we finally accomplished.

This was, in all respects, a most disagreeable affair to us both. Henry E—— was not only a mere youth (some twenty years old), acting, too, from the noblest impulses, but he was the grandson of Henry Clay, whose name he bore, and whom he greatly resembled; a statesman admired by us both beyond all others. Not only so, but Mr. James E—— was the brother of Mrs. John Bell, of Tennessee, whose distinguished husband was my intimate personal friend and political mentor, and both of

whom were among the warmest friends and admirers of Mr. Prentiss. I was, moreover, very fond of Henry, who had visited me not long before, and spent some days on my farm in Tennessee; add to this the consequences of the fall of Mr. Prentiss (I had no apprehension on account of Henry E——) to his family, his friends, and his country—and you may form some idea of my distress and anxiety.

There never lived a man more prompt to make the *amende honorable*, when deserved, than S. S. Prentiss, and an apology from him was made in a style so courtly and chivalrous as to elevate him in the estimation of the party, to whom it was offered. Such was the effect of a beautiful note, which he voluntarily addressed to the other party after the settlement of this matter. Those who came most excited against him, left the place his warm admirers and eulogists.

I have said, that I was convinced Henry E—— stood in no danger; and although Mr. Prentiss did not tell me, in so many words, he would not shoot at him, yet, I am well convinced, from my knowledge of the man, and the admiration he frequently expressed for the "gallant boy," as he termed him, that he would not have seen Henry fall by his hand, for all the mines of California.

I shall never forget a scene, calculated to try, in the severest manner, his patience and equanimity. It was on a cold Sabbath night, soon after he received this challenge. He came to my quarters, and informed me that he had just been arrested at his own house, and that he was anxious to return as speedily as possible to save Mrs. P. from alarm, she not knowing the cause of his absence. We accompanied the officer, with the understanding that he would drive us to the residence of the Recorder, there to arrange the matter of bail, not to fight in Louisiana; but, to our surprise, we very soon found ourselves in front of the municipal prison. Here the officer stopped, and refused to budge another inch, regardless alike of our persuasions and remonstrances. Finally, fearing that I might lose temper, Mr. Prentiss interposed, saying, in a good-humored tone, "Well, Peyton, we will not fight the law;" so leaving

him in the office or ante-room of the prison, I went in search of the captain of the watch. On my return, I found Mr. P. hovering over a few coals (it was very cold, and he came off without his cloak), with a strapping negro fellow, who had been picked up, towering near him. "Well," said I, "PRENTISS, this law of honor introduces us to strange bedfellows." "Yes," he replied, "I have endeavored to make my neighbor here feel at home, as I was the first squatter, but I can get nothing out of him. He takes me for a watchman." At length, Captain Winter arrived, and, in the most gentlemanly manner, accompanied us in quest of the Recorder—but as he was not to be found, the captain let us off, with the promise that we would be at the office of that functionary at eleven o'clock the next morning, to give bail, which, I need hardly say, we did most punctually.

I was at a loss which most to admire in Mr. PRENTISS, his chivalrous bearing and magnanimity, or the patience and good temper which he displayed from beginning to end of this most trying and unpleasant business of Henry E——.

It would be hard to express the relief and delight felt at this result, both North and South. For several days the whole country was filled with telegraphic rumors, that a hostile meeting had taken place, and that Mr. Prentiss had been killed. The agony and suspense of his friends at the North were indescribable, while at New Orleans, where the most conflicting and frightful reports were in circulation, the whole city was kept, for more than a week, in a state of intense agitation. "No similar affair," writes Col. Peyton, "ever excited an interest so deep and painful in New Orleans; and it was stated that there were stronger demonstrations of joy over the adjustment of this matter than those exhibited at the close of the Mexican war."

The following extract, from a letter of Richard T. Archer, Esq., of Port Gibson, will explain itself:—

There is an incident, which it may not be improper to mention as illustrative of Mr. Prentiss' feelings on the practice of duelling. When he was engaged to meet young Mr. E——, I went to New Orleans, on business of my own, and did not know of the difference until I arrived in the city. The very exaggerated accounts then current on the streets, reached me before I saw him. It was said there were nine challenges already written for him. He called in the evening at my hotel, accompanied by Col. Balie Peyton. I expressed my disapprobation of his accepting the challenge of a young man,* and I found that he had labored under the belief, that it was the only mode by which he could avoid involving his friends in a street affray. He was ever too generous and brave, and I immediately determined that our mutual friend, Gen. Felix Huston, should be present. I, therefore, informed him, that if he did not send for Huston, I would, and he then consented that Mr. Downs should go up for him. When Huston arrived, he and myself had much conversation apart from Prentiss. We both feared that he would stand up to be shot at, without purpose of returning Mr. E——'s fire. Huston feared that there was little to choose between his doing this, or killing his antagonist. "For," he said to me, "if Prentiss kills E——, I know his acute sensibility so well, that I tell you, you and I will bring him back a raving maniac!" Thinking it suicidal that he should stand to be shot down, and that it was unjust to an antagonist to subject him to the chances of taking the life of an unresisting man, I expostulated with Mr. Prentiss, as though I knew he did not intend to fire. After we left New Orleans, I renewed the subject, when we were alone. He thus replied to me, "My wife has packed up my clothes and bandages, and everything I can possibly want, and has not said one word to alter my purpose, though almost speechless with feeling; and this time, Archer, I will fight for my wife and children, *not for myself*."

* With the purpose of arresting so unequal a combat, I wrote and communicated to the *Picayune*, a "Tale of Chivalry Forty Years Ago," which possibly may have met your eye.

You know the result. I am satisfied that the street rumors had been false, and that no men, on such an occasion, could be freer from vindictive feeling, or the desire to push to extremes, than were the friends of Mr. E——. On our return to the city, I was told that Mrs. P. had fainted, as her husband left the house.* It was a week of intense feeling to us all. When I looked upon the reunion of husband and wife, of parent and children, I was myself as very a child as was present. Yet God, in his inscrutable wisdom, has separated them. May his blessing abide with the widow and orphans!"†

I have no doubt that Gen. Huston's apprehension was correct; but, if not, the effect of a fatal result to young E—— would have been, if possible, still more disastrous. Mr. Prentiss' friends who loved him best, would not have hesitated an instant to choose that *he*, rather than his antagonist, should have been the victim; nor can I think that, in the event of an actual meeting, he would have hesitated himself, his promise to Mr. Archer notwithstanding.

Can a practice which involves such moral consequences, be really justifiable at the bar of reason and conscience? An action that is strictly right may, of course, issue in

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* "My faith in God never wavered for a moment, and I said, *though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.* I knew it from the beginning, and yet could not raise my finger to prevent it. For two weeks I was in this condition, and couldn't eat, sleep, nor do anything but pray, weep and read my Bible. I was worn away to a perfect shadow, and tottered like an old man; with all this, I had a low, nervous fever, and, indeed, it is only now that I begin to feel at all like myself again."—*Extract from a Letter dated April 4th*, 1848.

† In a letter to Mr. Archer, written early in 1849, Mr. P. thus alludes to this unhappy affair:—

"I hope to see you in the city this winter, and to assure you in person, as I do now by letter, of the warm friendship and regard I entertain for you. I shall never forget your kindness, and the interest you took in my affairs, especially in the difficulty I became involved in last winter. I shall ever esteem you, as you have certainly been, one of my best friends, and always take pleasure in your prosperity and happiness."—Ed.

much sorrow and misery, as we see in the case of war ; it may be the subject of profound regret and painful recollections ; but can it ever excite *remorse* ?*

Mr. Clay expressed his joy at the result of this affair in the following beautiful letter :

" Ashland, 31 *March*, 1848.

I seize, my dear Mr. Prentiss, the first moment after my return home, to express to you my thanks and gratitude for the generosity and magnanimity displayed by you in the amicable adjustment of the difficulty, which had arisen between you and my grandson, H. Clay E——. I was at the Eastward, when he resolved to proceed to New Orleans, and ask of you satisfaction for the injury which he supposed you had inflicted on the character of his father; and he acted altogether on his own impulses, or the advice of young members of my family. When at Washington I heard of the occurrence, it occasioned me infinite pain and regret; but I concluded, from my knowledge of the chivalry and magnanimity of your character, that no hostile meeting would take place; and the gratifying event demonstrated the correctness of my judgment.

* I cannot forbear inserting here an extract from another letter just received. It is dated May 30, 1855. " He told me all about the E—— affair at the outset. He said that he had seen the young man—that he was a mere boy, and that he would as soon think of shooting at *my sister Margaret*, who was then a young girl. This was before the adjustment. He always said he never intended firing at the young man, but would fire in the air. He asked for time to deliberate, but was told that he must give an immediate answer. Miss Eliza E——, who was on a visit to me, expressed her surprise at his agitation, and the manner it seemed to affect him. As in previous affairs of the kind he had appeared perfectly calm and collected, she thought he must have felt the sinfulness of the act he was about to commit. He could do nothing; neither eat nor sleep. He was completely unnerved, and his health so much affected, that my brother, Dr. W., had to give him tonics, and take him out of the city. Finding I could not prevent it, I begged to be allowed to accompany him ; but he said he would rather I remained at home, and I did so. I have often wondered that he told me about it; but he never kept anything from me. You can imagine my feelings: two long weeks of suspense! I was very sick afterwards, and how I kept up during the time is wonderful. When I packed his trunk, I put into it a Bible given him by his mother years before. He afterwards told me that he saw and used it."

Nevertheless, during my sojourn in Philadelphia, just before I went out to dine in company, I heard that a meeting was certainly to be had, and that it had probably taken place about eight days prior to that time. I did not know, therefore, but that during the dinner, I might hear of the fall of my friend, or my grandson. Imagine what must have been the agonized state of my feelings! After the dinner was over, I was relieved by a telegraphic dispatch, announcing the honorable accommodation of the unpleasant affair.

This event, my dear Mr. PRENTISS, has added new cement to the friendship which has existed between us, and on which I have ever placed the highest value.

I request you to present my affectionate regards to Mrs. Prentiss; and how can I think of her, and your interesting children, without entreating you never to hazard a life so dear to them, and so precious to all your friends, but to none more than to

Your faithful friend,

H. CLAY.

The public mind, at this time, was chiefly occupied with questions growing out of the Mexican war. Some of these questions were novel in their character, and all of them were fraught with the gravest political issues. There was a party throughout the country, led on by influential politicians, who seemed inflamed with the lust of indefinite territorial expansion; they thought the United States could readily "swallow" all Mexico, and they were not indisposed to see the experiment made. A wild spirit of American propagandism, under the strange name of *Manifest Destiny*, was rampant in the land. Even grey-headed statesmen preached the doctrine with all the zeal of young converts, and strove to incorporate it with the established creed of the dominant party. The old stable maxims of the Republic were derided; and, for a time, anxiety and foreboding pervaded the community. Happily, the sober second thought of the nation

prevailed over temporary excitement and the intoxication of military glory.*

* A few paragraphs from Mr. Calhoun's noble speech against the conquest of Mexico, delivered in the U. S. Senate, January 4th, 1848, will confirm the above statement. If that eminent statesman had done nothing else worthy of honor, his truly dignified and patriotic course at this time, and previously in arresting a war with England upon the Oregon question, entitles him to be held in grateful and perpetual remembrance by the American people.

"We make a great mistake in supposing all people capable of self-government. Acting under that impression, many are anxious to force free governments on all the people of this Continent, and over the world, if they had the power. It has been lately urged in a very respectable quarter, that it is the mission of this country to spread civil and religious liberty over all the globe, and especially over this Continent, even by force, if necessary. It is a sad delusion. None but a people advanced to a high state of moral and intellectual excellence are capable, in a civilized condition, of forming and maintaining free governments; and among those who are so far advanced, very few indeed have had the good fortune to form constitutions capable of endurance. It is a remarkable fact in the political history of man, that there is scarcely an instance of a free constitutional government, which has been the work exclusively of foresight and wisdom. They have all been the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances. It is a very difficult task to make a constitution worthy of being called so. This admirable Federal Constitution of ours, is the result of such a combination. It is superior to the wisdom of any or of all the men by whose agency it was made. The force of circumstances, and not foresight or wisdom, induced them to adopt many of its wisest provisions.

"But of the few nations who have been so fortunate as to adopt a wise constitution, still fewer have had the wisdom long to preserve one. It is harder to preserve than to obtain liberty. After years of prosperity, the tenure by which it is held is but too often forgotten; and I fear, Senators, that such is the case with us. There is no solicitude now for liberty. Who talks of liberty when any great question comes up? Here is a question of the first magnitude as to the conduct of this war; do you hear anybody talk about its effects upon our liberties and our free institutions? No, sir. That was not the case formerly. In the early stages of our government, the great anxiety was, how to preserve liberty. The great anxiety now is for the attainment of mere military glory. In the one we are forgetting the other. The maxim of former times was, that power is always stealing from the many to the few; the price of liberty was perpetual vigilance. They were constantly looking out and watching for danger. Not so now. Is it because there has been any decay of liberty among the people? Not at all. I believe the love of liberty was never more ardent, but they have forgotten the tenure of liberty, by which alone it is preserved.

"We think we may now indulge in everything with impunity, as if we held our charter of liberty by 'right divine'—from Heaven itself. Under these impressions we plunge into war, we contract heavy debts, we increase the patronage of the Executive, and we talk of a crusade to force our institutions of liberty upon all people. There is no species of extravagance which our people imagine will endanger their

Mr. Prentiss was too deeply impressed with the importance of the crisis to remain silent. For the first time, after removing to New Orleans, he took part in political affairs, by addressing a large meeting, called for the purpose of nominating delegates to the Whig National Convention, on the evening of February 22d, 1848.

The victories of Gen. Taylor on the Rio Grande, and those admirable traits of character which were thereby suddenly disclosed to the public eye, had already led to his nomination as an independent candidate for the Presidency. In Louisiana, his adopted State, the feeling in his favor was especially strong and enthusiastic; so much so that not a few of the most prominent Whigs, believing he could be elected as an independent candidate, had taken decided ground against submitting his claims to the decision of a National Convention. Had this policy been carried out, and Louisiana failed to be represented at the Philadelphia convention, it is pretty certain that Gen. Taylor's political fortunes would have been nipped in the bud. Indeed, as it was, nothing but the solemn assurances of the Louisiana delegation, pledging him to Whig principles, and to abide by the choice of the Convention, finally secured his nomination, and saved the party from hopeless divisions.

At this critical juncture, Mr. Prentiss came forward, and threw his influence into the scale of united and national action. The spirit of his address will appear from the following imperfect sketch:

Fellow-Whigs:—I came here to-night to perform my duty as a good Whig, desirous of promoting the harmony and united action of our great and noble party. Though I have mingled

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liberty in any degree. Sir, the hour is approaching—the day of retribution will come. It will come as certainly as I am now addressing the Senate, and when it does come, awful will be the reckoning; heavy the responsibility somewhere."

deeply in the political contests of a neighboring State, yet since my residence in this city, private duties and interests have withdrawn me almost wholly from public affairs, and it is with no aspirations beyond the position of a mere private in the ranks, that I appear among you to-night. I am still a devoted, enthusiastic Whig, such as I have ever been since I learned to distinguish between right and wrong, and such as I expect to be when the grave shall demand my mortal frame.

I understand it to be the object of this meeting, fellow-citizens, to secure a representation in the National Convention, which is to determine to whom our glorious Whig banner shall be confided in the coming contest. We must sink all mere personal preferences, in the greater good of our party. We have come together to offer up our private affections and partialities upon the altar of Whig harmony. As an old Whig, who has never deserted his standard, or turned his back upon the enemy, I am here to give my humble counsel in furtherance of this design. I have been among the strongest opponents of conventions, but all must be convinced that at present they cannot be dispensed with. What is mere personal, individual action in a great political contest, but the folly of the soldier, who at Buena Vista would have shouldered his musket and gone forth alone against the serried ranks and bristling bayonets of the Mexican host? It is only by keeping together—by *preserving the touch of the elbow*, that success is achieved in the day of battle; and so it is in that great civil conflict, a Presidential election. We must act together, then—we must throw all our local and personal predilections into the crucible of a National Convention, so that we may draw forth the pure gold, and present it to the people for their admiration and enrichment. If the State of Louisiana could elect the President, I acknowledge there would be no necessity for such consultation; but our sister States have something to say in this matter, and their will and counsel must be heard, their rights and influence should be acknowledged. We must not expect to force our individual preferences upon others. Had *I* the choice of a President—did it rest with me to indicate the successor of the present occupant of the Chief

Magistracy—I should not be much puzzled to select—I should cling to my first love—I should shout aloud the name of that veteran statesman, who has attained the very highest eminence on the pedestal of fame—under whose banner I have so often been proud to fight—whose white plume I have so often followed in battle, when, like that of the gallant Harry V. it tossed to and fro in the conflict, but never bowed to power, nor was stained by cowardice. I should give my vote for —— (*but ere the name passed Mr. P.'s lips, there was a tremendous outburst from the crowd, which shook the building, and made the name of CLAY reverberate through the immense room in tones of thunder*).

But (resumed Mr. P. when silence was restored), it is not for me to choose for the whole party. Fortunately we have many noble leaders; men, adorned with all those high virtues and capacities, which fit them for the exalted office of presiding over a free people. But the Whig party is laboring, I trust, for something more than the elevation of an individual. I understand it to be contending for the ascendency and triumph of certain fixed and all-important principles. In spirit it has existed since the foundation of the government, and always must exist. It is the great conservative party of the country: by its position and moral power, preserving the harmony and security of our political system. Holding fast to the golden mean, it would save the Constitution alike from the wild innovations of restless radicals, and from the selfish schemes of calculating demagogues and placemen.

The Whig party, I repeat, does not depend on any one individual alone. Persons are mortal, but Whig principles are eternal. Nor is it identical with any particular set of measures. The bank, the tariff, and other temporary issues, do not involve the life of the Whig cause; these are questions of political policy, which may be decided against us, and yet Whig *principles* live on in all their strength and salutary influence. It is only by destroying our republican institutions, that these great principles of law, and order, and social restraint, which I hold to be among the proper principles of the Whig party, can cease to exist and to have power in this nation. I am not ready to aban-

don such a party and such principles for the chimera of independent no-partyism. We shall rue the day when this no-party idea is carried out; when we have no political principles to contend for. Then the people, like a great giant, will lie down to sleep, while the demagogues carry on their nefarious purposes with impunity and success. God save us from such no-partyism! God save the Whig party from the disgrace of deserting its standard at this momentous epoch of our public affairs! The conquest of a vast empire—the immense additions which have been made to our territory, and the necessity of governing this new acquisition through proconsuls, or other agents, will throw into the hands of this Government a power of corruption, which, unless resisted by all the vigor, union and strength of the Whigs, will be likely to subvert both the Constitution and the Union.

I am in favor, then, of sending delegates to the National Convention—not as Taylor nor as Clay men, but as good Whigs, devoted to the success and triumph of our party and our principles. If Gen. Taylor should be the choice of that Convention, I for one, whatever may have been and may now be my personal preference, should willingly fight under the banner of the brave old chieftain, the prestige of whose victories over a foreign enemy would give him irresistible strength before the people in a civil contest. I speak of Gen. Taylor as a Whig, a true Whig, whose principles and views are those of the great Whig party of the nation. Though devoted for forty years to the occupation of a soldier, he has given such striking proof of fitness for civil life, that I, for one, should fear not to trust him with the delicate and responsible duties of the Presidency.

But I have, I repeat, no confidence in the independent no-partyism, which has lately exploded in this city. I don't believe that we have yet reached a political millenium, when "*the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.*"

We have already seen the ardor of this independent no-partyism cool off in two weeks. Some of our friends were too quick on the trigger, but they have seen their error, and are rapidly retracing their steps. When Gen. Taylor was first named for

the Presidency, it was thought the movement would be acquiesced in by the Whigs all over the Union; but it turned out differently, and hence the necessity of a National Convention. Let that Convention act, and we will join heart and hand in giving effect to its decision. The Whig party is certain of one victory in every four or five chances. The Democrats will beat us at least three out of four times in the Presidential contest; but they are pretty sure to get things all wrong, and to require Whig wisdom to set them right again. They will mismanage the engine, and get the screws loose; but when things are so bad, that they can't be made worse, then good Whig engineers will come in to restore order and efficiency, and put the noble ship of State again upon the right track.

In conclusion, then, let us go into the choice of our candidate in the spirit of harmony and mutual concession. The roll of our party abounds in names that would do honor to the Presidency. In our Whig firmament there are many stars. You may strike out a few, and yet not leave us in gloom, or darkness. We are like the fair lady, who looks into her casket of jewels, and is sorely puzzled to determine which brilliant stone or glittering diamond shall adorn her lovely brow. Let us not be guilty of the folly of quarrelling about individuals, when we have great principles to guard and to contend for!

Let the Convention select Old Zack, and who of you will withhold his support—his warm and cordial support from one who has done so much for our national fame and character—one, who has borne the stars and stripes hundreds of miles into a hostile land—and whose heroic exploits are yet surpassed by his gentle and humane virtues? But, should the choice of the Convention fall upon the great statesman, whose civic laurels yields not in splendor to the brightest chaplets that ever bloomed upon a warrior's brow, what Whig will hesitate or falter in his support? Since the days of Washington, what name has exerted so potent an influence upon the Whig party as that of Henry Clay? When has his clarion voice been heard that it did not kindle an ardor and zeal in all true Whigs greater than that aroused in a soldier's breast, by the tones of the

trumpet, the deep rolling of the drum, or the loud booming of cannon? (Here again loud cheers and cries of "*Hurrah for Clay!*" drowned the speaker's voice, and rendered it impossible to catch the conclusion of his address.)

Mr. Prentiss was appointed at the head of the Delegation, and was earnestly solicited to attend the Convention at Philadelphia. Mr. Clay was particularly anxious that he should be present. "I saw, with much satisfaction," he writes to him, "that you were appointed one of the delegates from Louisiana to the National Convention, which is to assemble in June next. I sincerely hope that you may be able to attend it. I believe your presence there is highly important. You will take an impartial survey of the whole ground, and have it in your power to arrive at a just decision.

* * * * *

"Should you attend the Convention, which I most earnestly entreat you to do, if practicable, I hope you will come and stop with me a while. Independent of any public considerations, I shall be delighted to see and entertain you under my roof."

The following letter shows the ground of his strong personal preference of Mr. Clay over Gen. Taylor as a Whig candidate for the Presidency :—

NEW ORLEANS, *May* 22, 1848.

MY DEAR BROTHER :—

I feel really ashamed of my neglect towards you, and hardly know which excuse to make for it; the fact is, I have a most unaccountable repugnance to writing letters, and since Mary has got in the habit of corresponding with you and Anna, I have pretty much abandoned my portfolio to her; but, as she is now absent, I will resume the pen *pro tempore*. She and the children went up to Longwood about three weeks ago. I took them up, and returned immediately. I was anx-

ious that they should get a little fresh country air. I have half completed an arrangement, to take them over to the sea-shore for two or three months during the summer. If I do not go there, I shall stay in the city, unless there is an epidemic. * * I take very little part in politics; indeed the only political speech I have made since I removed to this city, was the one of which you saw an imperfect report. I did it to produce harmony among the Whigs here. It is perfectly ridiculous for a respectable party to make its success dependent upon any one man. That Henry Clay is a thousand times better fitted than Gen. Taylor, for the first office in the nation, no man of sense and observation can deny. Clay is a statesman, well acquainted with our institutions, our political history, our relations, both foreign and domestic. He understands polity, and is every way fitted to guide the councils of the country. General Taylor is a brave, honest, simple man; wholly ignorant of politics. To him all matters of State will be Gordian knots, and as he cannot solve them with his sword, he will be compelled to call in others to untie them; in other words, he must be guided by his Cabinet. Should he be elected, however, I see, on the whole, no reason to doubt that his administration will be, if not a brilliant, at least a safe and good one. If Mr. Clay can be elected, the Whigs ought not to hesitate a moment in preferring him to General Taylor; but if he cannot, then General T. is infinitely preferable to any Democrat. I have met him several times in private, and am delighted with the old man's modesty and simplicity; he is, without doubt, a good man, of most sterling qualities; but he is certainly weak, and ignorant in matters out of his profession. I deem it so important, however, that the Whigs should obtain the ascendency in the coming election, that I am willing to go for almost any man who will bring around that result. There never was a period when it was more important that power should be placed in conservative hands. The sudden and startling revolutions which are taking place in Europe, on the one hand; and, on the other, our possession by conquest of the great empire of Mexico, are sufficient to turn the heads of the Democrats. They are liable to go to any lengths, and in their worship of what they call

progress, to look with contempt upon all the wisdom and experience of the past. I fear much that the government, under the present condition of things, would not be safe in Democratic hands.

I regret I cannot attend the convention at Philadelphia. I could, I think, do some service; and besides, if once there, I could pay you all a visit, which would be most delightful. My business however, will not permit it. I must abstain from politics, and postpone for another year the happiness of seeing those I love so much. I intend to take time by the forelock, and make my arrangements in advance for a trip North, next summer. So far as human agency is concerned, I shall endeavor not to be baulked again. I shall never be contented, till our dear mother has put her hand upon the heads of my wife and children, and blessed them.

I most deeply regret poor ——'s misfortunes, and my present inability to aid him. It is certainly hard, that so worthy and industrious, as well as capable a man, should suffer for want of proper employment. When I think of his large family, and small means, I reproach myself for my own carelessness and prodigality, but for which I might, perhaps, have been able to relieve him from his difficulties. My family are all well, and I expect them home next day after to-morrow. I feel very lonesome without them, and shall hardly permit them to be absent from me so long again. The weather is getting warm, and the business season is drawing to a close. In a month the courts will all adjourn over till November; and I shall then endeavor to take a little repose. I need some rest, for I have worked hard during the winter. My love to you all.

Your affectionate brother,

——— SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *July* 16, 1848.

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I cannot express to you how much I was gratified at receiving your long and affectionate letter. The sight of

your handwriting alone was no small pleasure, even before I had read it. It seemed almost like seeing yourself; and then when I read all your kind words, I felt both happy and thankful that such a true and loving mother was still spared to me. You cannot feel more disappointed than we do at not being able to visit you this summer; but I do both hope and believe that nothing will prevent us next year. We have set our hearts upon it, and shall go if it be possible. Mary has written to you of the severe accident which had befallen our little girl. It has been now three weeks since her fall. She is doing exceedingly well, considering the nature of the fracture. It was a compound fracture of the thigh. She has suffered but little pain since the bone was first set, and has had no fever. The wound is almost healed, and I think, in about two weeks, we can take off the bandages. I do not think she will be lame or suffer any permanent injury. Still it is very uncertain, as a compound fracture seldom occurs without causing some lameness. Poor thing, it will be a sad misfortune to her, should she be lame. I am afraid her disposition is not such as to enable her to bear it patiently. She has, however, been a very good girl, and shown a great deal of fortitude. She has, of course, been confined to her bed, lying in one position. As soon as she can be moved, we shall go over to the sea-shore and probably spend the remainder of the summer there. We have engaged part of a house, and board in a very nice family, and I think it will be pleasant for Mary and the children. The sea-bathing will be good for them, at all events.

I am much gratified that you are pleased with your move to Newburyport, and with your situation there. Your little grandchildren must be a great comfort to you, though, if you had them *all* about you, I fear their number and noise would run you distracted. Mr. Huntington, who paid A. a visit a few weeks ago, speaks of her children in the most extravagant terms, almost enough to make me jealous. I believe, I wrote you that I had a letter from S—— about six or seven weeks ago. He was still at the old place, in Missouri, but no better off than when he went there. Poor fellow! he seems to have bad luck

in his projects. His health was good, but he wrote in very low spirits. My love to Anna, the children, and Mr. S——, and believe me, my dearest mother, always,

Your affectionate and devoted son,

SEARGENT.

P. S.—I ordered one of our city papers, the *Picayune*, to be sent you; thinking you might like to know what is going on here.

Although the pressure of business rendered it impossible for him to go to Philadelphia, he took great interest in the proceedings there; and after the nomination of Gen. Taylor, he entered upon the canvass with patriotic zeal. In the course of the summer, he visited different parts of Louisiana and neighboring States, and addressed the people in behalf of Taylor and Fillmore. His exertions were, no doubt, far beyond his strength. On one occasion he swam a river, which the rains had swollen, in order to meet an engagement; and it is not improbable that, had he spent the summer in entire repose, or in a voyage at sea, he might still have been alive. The climate and battlefields of Mexico were not more fatal to life and health than is a warmly contested Presidential election, for those who have to encounter its toils, fatigues and fearful excitements. In a letter, written in April, 1849, having occasion to allude somewhat pointedly to his efforts in this canvass, he says: "No man in the United States labored more vigorously in behalf of Gen. Taylor than I did. Indeed, I have just now arisen from a bed of sickness, which I contracted by my exposure and exertions in the canvass. With regard to Fillmore, I did more than any man in this region. I had served with him in Congress, and my opinion, therefore, had greater weight. I denounced the various slanders, both oral and written, that were circulated in this State against him, in

a manner which, while it tended to destroy their effect, threatened daily to involve me in dangerous personal difficulties."

I was present (writes Col. Peyton) and heard all his speeches in 1848. To say that they were able and eloquent, would be but faint praise; they were such as no other man could have made. In the defence of Mr. Fillmore, who was greatly misrepresented at the South, and who was the weak point of our ticket in that section, he was almost irresistible. On this subject he spoke from personal knowledge, and with an ardor and earnestness that was conclusive with all unprejudiced men.

I remember an incident of this canvass, which shows his forbearance and magnanimity of character, under strong provocation. We met at Clinton, in the interior of Louisiana, where he charmed and electrified the audience, more especially the ladies, with one of his happiest efforts; after which we separated, I going into the "Pineywoods," and he returning to New Orleans by Port Hudson, where he took a steamer for the city. On this boat he met a rude, boisterous Locofoco, a Col. M——, who denounced Gen. Taylor and Mr. Fillmore as abolitionists, and finally became so much excited as to make a personal attack on Mr. Prentiss, who defended them. A gentleman present advised him to use his cane, which he declined to do, and handing it to a bystander, grappled the colonel, and held him with so firm a grasp that he was completely powerless, although a man in the prime of life, and greatly over his own size. After they were separated, those who witnessed the affair, inquired why he did not strike the man with his cane? He replied, "I could handle him without it; and, besides, I did not wish to harm him; he is intoxicated." No man possessed a kinder or more forgiving nature than Mr. Prentiss.

It was quite late in the summer before the public mind became thoroughly aroused in this contest. The disappointment of many warm adherents of Mr. Clay, that he had not been nominated; a similar disappointment on the part

of the devoted admirers of Mr. Webster and Gen. Scott, that those eminent citizens had been passed by; the course of Gen. Taylor's "Independent" friends; his own epistolary errors, the fruit of his simple honesty and total ignorance of electioneering ways; the serious repugnance felt by some good men in the party, to the elevation of a military man to the Presidency;—these causes, together with the Free-Soil excitement, created a sort of stupor among the Whigs for a couple of months after the nomination. Had there not been grievous disappointment and divisions among the Democrats, Gen. Cass would, no doubt, have been triumphantly elected.

In a letter to his elder brother, dated PASS CHRISTIAN, August 25, 1848, Mr. P. writes:

I am making some personal exertions in favor of Taylor, and shall continue to do so till the election. Last week I went to Clinton, in the northern part of Louisiana, and addressed the people there; and on the 2d prox. I am to be at Baton Rouge, by appointment, to participate in a public discussion which is to take place between the two parties. I think Louisiana will go for Taylor; but it is by no means certain; and while I have much hope, I am not over-sanguine as to the general result. It is true, the dissensions in the Democratic ranks are favorable; and I trust Van Buren will kill off Cass in the Northern States. We have just received the news that Polk has signed the Oregon bill, *with the Wilmot proviso*. This is a heavy blow to the Southern Democracy, who have made that the leading question; and I am of opinion it will result to the decided advantage of the Whigs.

It is proper to state here, that Mr. Prentiss took very decided ground against the so-called Wilmot proviso. This celebrated clause, as the reader hardly needs to be told, prohibited the introduction of slavery into any territory of the United States, where it did not already exist. Mr. Prentiss regarded it as a violation of the constitutional rights of

the South. He contended that the Constitution was based on a compromise between the North and the South; that all the States were entitled to share equally in the new territories of the Union; that to prohibit the Southern half of them from carrying their slaves there, was really to exclude them from the territories; and that, therefore, such legislation was essentially unjust and unconstitutional. It is but fair to add, that his general views of slavery, as a social institution, had undergone a great change during his residence in Mississippi. On this subject, he departed from the doctrine of his political master, Henry Clay, and adopted substantially the theory of Mr. Calhoun.

He was not ready to admit that domestic servitude, as it exists in the Southern States, is a great moral evil; or even that, in the progress of Christian society, it is destined to disappear. But it always seemed to me that he was somewhat self-willed and in contradiction with himself when defending this position; for no one could speak with more severity or abhorrence of the maltreatment of a slave than he did; no one could depict in more vivid colors the ignorant and thriftless race of "poor white farmers," who form a natural stratum of Southern society between the negro and his master; no one could dwell with a nobler eloquence upon the happy effects of diversifying human industry, of multiplying and nurturing the mechanic arts, of elevating labor, and affording every man free scope to unfold whatever power was in him; nor had any one a keener sense than he of the peril to which children are exposed by associating with slaves. He often remarked, that some of the worst masters he had ever known were from the North; they had none of that natural, kindly affection towards their slaves, which is common to natives of the South. Perhaps a somewhat similar *theoretical* effect is apt to follow an acquaintance with slavery after childhood; at any rate, some of the most

extreme views of the institution have been advocated by men born and bred in the North, while the most wise and considerate, as in the case of Mr. Clay, have been held by men trained in the midst of it.

But while Mr. Prentiss maintained that the African race cannot co-exist with the Anglo-Saxon, in a state of social or political freedom ; that subjection, more or less absolute, is, in this country, their necessary position, and the one best adapted to their improvement ; he was strongly in favor of wise legal enactments for protecting their rights and ameliorating their condition. He contended that the law, as well as public sentiment at the South, recognized them as persons, and not as mere chattels ; that they had rights, in the strictest sense ; and that the State was bound to secure and enforce them.

His own treatment of the colored man, whether bond or free, was always most kind. Nothing could show this better than the fact that many years before his death, a young free negro "squat" upon his premises, insisted upon becoming his servant, and did serve him, in the most faithful and affectionate manner, to the last day of his life. He was at full liberty to go when and where he pleased, but attachment to Mr. Prentiss seemed to be his ruling passion.

Writing again to his elder brother, under date of Oct. 17, Mr. P. says :

I have made a number of speeches in different portions of the State, and am perfectly satisfied, from all my observations, that Louisiana is safe for Taylor and Fillmore, by a handsome majority. I have little, in fact no, doubt now of their election. The result in Pennsylvania has settled the matter. The report you allude to, that I was opposed to Fillmore, is equally ridiculous and untrue. It doubtless arose from some complimentary remarks which I made at Mobile in reference to the *personal* character of Gen. Butler. This some of the Locofoco writers distorted into an

expression of preference of Butler for Vice-President. Of course, such an idea never entered my head, nor did any expression of mine warrant it. I consider Fillmore the very best selection that could have have made. He is a true, honest, conservative Whig, and as good a friend of the South as any man north of Mason's and Dixon's line. I have, on all occasions, taken pains to vindicate him from the rabid attacks of the Locofocos, and to bear witness, as one of his colleagues in Congress, to his talents and patriotism. To-morrow night I am to address the "Fillmore Rangers," a body composed of the leading and most influential young men of the city. They have assumed the name to show that they are as zealous for Fillmore as for Taylor.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *Oct.* 24, 1848.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I returned a few days since from the country, after an absence of three or four weeks. I took Mary, you know, and the children, up to Natchez about two months ago, from the sea-shore; they have remained there ever since. I have been busy, part of the time, at the courts, and the remainder in electioneering for Taylor and Fillmore. I have worn myself entirely down, and can scarcely speak above a whisper. Indeed, I never was so thoroughly used up in my life. My breast is a good deal inflamed, and my throat sore. However, I shall get over it after a few days' rest, and I have determined not to make any more speeches before the election. The fact is, I cannot do so with safety. I believe I have done some good to the cause. Louisiana, I think, is certain for the Whigs; and, on the whole, I feel the utmost confidence in the general result. But I have something more interesting to tell you than politics—at least more so to me. This morning I got a note from Mrs. Williams, informing me that on Saturday morning I became the father of a fine, bouncing girl, and that both daughter and mother were doing most excellently well. You may imagine how eager I am to go and give the little stranger a father's welcome into the

wide world she has so suddenly stumbled upon. I expect A. will be trying to "swop" one of her boys for one of my little girls. You see my paternal honors are increasing, and that I am becoming in truth "paterfamilias." I feel quite alarmed when I see the extent of my responsibilities. Children are sources of much care, it is true; but they are certainly very great blessings —at least, such have I found mine. What have you done about the professorship at Bowdoin? I did not write to advise you because you were much the best judge of the matter. It was a compliment, at all events; but I am rather in hopes you have declined it. A professorship in one of our colleges, is a laborious, ill paid, and thankless office. In a worldly point of view, the professorship tendered cannot be as good as your present position, and as a field for doing good can hardly be better. Give my love to your family, and believe me always

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

Although Mr. Prentiss was very severe in denouncing the slanders against Mr. Fillmore, yet his general tone was so fair and dignified as to win the highest praise from his political opponents themselves. The Washington *Union*, then edited by the veteran Ritchie, contained several complimentary notices of his speeches.

A touching reminiscence by Mr. Thorpe will fitly close this sketch of his connection with the Presidential Election of 1848:

I had the melancholy pleasure of hearing Mr. Prentiss' last, and, it seemed to me, his greatest speech. Towards the close of the last Presidential campaign, I found him in the interior of the State, endeavoring to recruit his declining health. He had been obliged to avoid all public speaking, and had gone far into the country to get away from excitement. But there was a "gathering" near by his temporary home, and he consented to be present. It was late in the evening when he ascended the "stand," which was supported by the trunks of two magnificent

forest-trees, through which the setting sun poured with picturesque effect. The ravages of ill health were apparent upon his face, and his high massive forehead was paler, and more transparent than usual. His audience, some three or four hundred persons, was composed in a large degree of his old and early friends. He seemed to feel deeply, and as there was nothing to oppose, he assumed the style of the mild and beautiful. He casually alluded to the days of his early coming among his Southern friends—to the hours of pleasure he had passed, and to the hopes of the future. In a few moments the bustle and confusion natural to a fatiguing day of political wrangling ceased, one straggler after another suspended his noisy demonstration, and gathered near the speaker. Soon a mass of silent, but heart-heaving humanity was crowded compactly before him. Had PRENTISS, on that occasion, held the very heart-strings of his auditors in his hand, he could not have had them more in his power. For an hour he continued, rising from one important subject to another, until the breath was fairly suspended in the excitement. An uninterested spectator would have supposed that he had used sorcery in thus transfixing his auditors. While all others forgot, he noticed that the day was drawing to a close; he turned and looked toward the setting sun, and apostrophized its fading glory; then, in his most touching voice and manner, concluded as follows:

"Friends—That glorious orb reminds me that the day is spent, and that I too must close. Ere we part, let me hope that it may be our good fortune to end our days in the same splendor, and that, when the evening of life comes, we may sink to rest with the clouds that close in our departure gold-tipped with the effulgence of a well-spent life."

In looking back to the result of this election, and to the stirring scenes which preceded it, one cannot resist a vivid impression of the mutability of all things earthly. In less than seven years what changes have occurred! The hero of the Rio Grande, with his accomplished son-in-law, Col. Bliss, President Polk, the veteran statesman of Kentucky,

and the great sons of New England and South Carolina, not to mention others, are all in their graves! But the name of Taylor will not easily be forgotten. His life will always form a romantic episode in American history.

He was a man of strongly-marked individuality. His character was a model of republican simplicity. He had not, it is true, the symmetrical finish, or the colossal proportions and unapproachable majesty, which belonged to Washington; nor had he the imperial make and temper of Gen. Jackson. But neither of these great men was a braver soldier, a truer patriot, or an honester man, than Zachary Taylor.

Mr. Prentiss thus expressed his satisfaction with the result of the election:

NEW ORLEANS, *Nov.* 25, 1848.

MY DEAR BROTHER:

I returned to the city yesterday with Mary and the children, after having been absent two or three weeks. I received your letter, announcing the birth of a son, only on the day I left, and had not time to congratulate you, as I now do, upon the auspicious event. I am glad you have a boy, and also that mine was a girl. I think a family of boys and girls much preferable to one composed of either alone. Brothers and sisters exert a salutary influence over each other, and afford full scope for the exercise, even in childhood, of the best affections and humanities.

I trust the little one is well, and that auspicious stars looked down upon his birth. May he live to become a good and prosperous gentleman. His little cousin, who preceded him one day in her entrance into this bustling world, is in most excellent health and condition. She takes things with a quiet philosophy, which indicates both good temper and good digestion. Mary and the children are in better health than I ever knew them to be heretofore. My own general health has improved somewhat, though I am suffering from a desperate cold. Well, the election is now over, and we have achieved a glorious triumph. But,

after all, we were in a very dangerous position. The whole election turned on Pennsylvania, and her vote was really a god-send. Four months ago I did not place the slightest calculation upon it. Ohio, upon which we relied, failed us most miserably; but I am very willing to exchange her for the old Keystone State. I think Pennsylvania may be relied upon hereafter. She has more interest in being a Whig State than any other in the Union; and her population, though slow and somewhat ignorant, is improving every day, and has a stability of character which is calculated to render permanent the change they have undergone. How magnificently Louisiana has behaved; our majority will not fall much short of 3,000, far exceeding our most sanguine expectations. On the whole, I am well satisfied with the result. We shall have four years of firm, honest, and peaceful administration of the Government. In the meantime, the crisis of European revolutions will probably have passed, and the prosperity and happiness of our own country have advanced to a point which will satisfy all men of the superiority of a *Whig-conservative* over a *Democratic-progressive* Administration. At all events, things look more favorable than they have during my time, and I anticipate the best results. The utmost confidence may be placed in Old Zach. He is honest and true, and I am much mistaken if the demagogues, even of the Whig party, do not find him above their arts and influences. I need not say to you, that I have nothing to ask for. I would not take any office within the gift of the President, even if it were tendered me. I return from the political struggle to my professional pursuits with renewed pleasure. I shall carefully abstain from mingling any further with political matters, and devote myself wholly to my profession. Business has commenced again, and my prospects continue to improve. I have every confidence in eventually getting out of debt and making another fortune. Mary and all the children join me in love to you and yours, especially tendering to the little stranger "the assurances of our distinguished consideration."

Your affectionate brother,

SERGENT.

TO THE SAME.

NEW ORLEANS, *Dec.* 25, 1848.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I wish you all a merry Christmas. I sincerely trust it may be more joyous than ours; for just now times are very gloomy here. You have, doubtless, learned from public sources that the cholera is prevailing to a considerable extent, and with great virulence. It commenced about a week since. Much discussion took place as to the character of the disease; but, three or four days ago, it was publicly announced by the Board of Health to be the genuine Asiatic Cholera. I attempted to persuade Mary to leave the city with the children, and proposed to take them to Natchez (that is, to Longwood), but she refused to go unless I would agree to remain there. This I could not do without sacrificing my business, and so we have concluded to stay it out. One of our servants has had it, but is now getting well. The rest of us are in good health, and as we are very careful in our diet, we feel very little apprehension. It prevails, as usual, most severely and almost entirely so far, among those whose habits, or mode of life, expose them in the greatest degree. I think the disease has already reached its climax. For several days the deaths have probably amounted to forty and fifty per day. To-day, I understand, there are not as many cases, and should the weather prove favorable, I think the pestilence will pass over us in the course of another week. I have not myself the slightest apprehension, as I have twice passed through it, though I should feel better if my family was out of the city. Mary, however, is perfectly fearless, and the children in the best health, except colds, which we are all, more or less, affected with. Capt. D. is here, and dined with us to-day. He is in good health, and will spend Christmas with us to-morrow. Since the election, I have paid but little attention to political matters, and can give you no positive information upon the subject of Gen. Taylor's cabinet. There is no doubt, however, in my mind, that it will be composed of honest, able and trustworthy Whigs. It is understood that Gen. Taylor wrote to Mr. Crittenden immediately after his election, offering

his choice; but it is almost certain that Mr. C. will not take office. Mr. Clayton, of Delaware, will no doubt go into the cabinet, and beyond that I cannot say, for I do not believe Gen. Taylor, when last in New Orleans, had made up his own mind on the subject. He is personally unacquainted with most of our public men, and will take his own time to make up his mind. Of one thing, however, you may be certain—the old man is honest and true. I have seen him several times since the election, and my confidence in him has increased at every interview. I got a letter from S. the other day. He is still in Missouri, and though in good health, does not seem to have bettered his fortunes. Poor fellow! he certainly has patience and perseverance worthy of greater success. Unless this cholera should continue and break up the courts, I think I shall do a good business this winter, and trust to be enabled to pay you all a visit next year. It will not do, however, to calculate upon it with too much confidence. I wish to see your children, and that you should see mine; and, above all, that they may receive dear mother's blessing. I sympathize with you and L. upon the death of her dear mother, which is a most heavy affliction. Mary joins me in condolence for this sad event, as well as in love and affection for you all.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Prentiss' Character as a Popular Orator—The Sources of his Power—Misconceptions on the Subject—Resemblance between him and Patrick Henry—Peculiarities of his Oratory—Its Strength lay chiefly in the Subject-matter of his Addresses—His Political Opinions—Distrust of mere Politicians—His Views respecting the Form of our Government—It is not a simple Democracy—Its Practical Methods—The Will of the People not found in Primary Assemblies, or Mass Meetings; but only in the legitimate Action of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Authorities—American System of Liberty essentially Historical, and Peculiar to Ourselves—Evils in the working of the Government—Executive Patronage—Extracts from Calhoun on the Subject—Debasement of the Presidential Office—His Opinion and Abhorrence of Demagogues—Extract from Aristotle—His Patriotic Hopes.

The Presidential election of 1848 closed Mr. Prentiss' active participation in public affairs. It may not be amiss, therefore, before proceeding with our narrative, to offer some further reflections upon his character as a popular orator, and also to give a brief summary of his political opinions.

Many regarded his oratory as a kind of intellectual magic. They felt its bewitching power, they perceived its wonderful influence upon others, saw how all classes, learned and illiterate, old and young, men and women, were alike carried captive by it; but, beyond this, it seemed to them a mystery as puzzling as the ancient "gift of tongues;" they could not explain it on the ordinary principles of rhetorical cause and effect. Much of this popular wonder arose, no doubt, from simple ignorance or misconception of the facts of his early life. From his first appearance at the

bar of Mississippi, he was a sort of mythical personage. From the obscurity of a retiring schoolmaster, he had emerged into the public gaze so suddenly, and with such brilliant effect, that everybody was curious to know his history; everybody was disposed to seize upon and magnify all the strange stories in circulation about him. Some said he had been unkindly treated in his childhood, and, in a freak of fortune, had wandered off to Mississippi, a neglected, penniless boy. At Natchez, such was the tradition, "a clergyman, of the Methodist persuasion, by sheer accident, formed the acquaintance of the unpretending lad, and with much difficulty persuaded him to embark in the legal profession. Diffidence had near weaned the brightest star from the most favored position in the galaxy."* That he had any knowledge, except what he had picked up also "by sheer accident," seemed never to have crossed the minds of those who credited these fabulous stories. When, therefore, they came actually to hear one of his magnificent speeches, and observed his high-toned, gentlemanly bearing, the glance of his fine eye, and that dauntless look of personal and intellectual prowess, which all his modesty could not hide, is it strange that they regarded him as a splendid meteor; or that the profane among them expressed their feelings in oaths of astonishment? Genius, indeed, especially the genius of eloquence, is always viewed by the many as something preternatural—a kind of miracle in speech. There is that about it, which can be understood, or explained, by itself alone. Who can analyze the influence of sweet music, while ravished by its charms? or who can renew the spell by which it bound fast the soul, and "lapped it in Elysium?"

It is not so difficult, however, to explain the mental

* *New Orleans Delta.*

forces, which produce the marvellous effect. In the present instance they are open as day. A vigorous understanding, gifted with a rare faculty at once of analysis and synthesis, was the base ; add to this a quick, inventive fancy, strong memory, lively sensibilities, a highly impressible temperament ; crown the whole with true genius, and we have the main elements of Mr. Prentiss' intellectual character. The same general qualities, a little differently combined, make the great poet, philosopher, or divine. As a robust understanding was the substratum of his mind, so knowledge, reflection, logical method, judgment, good sense, and the other proper fruits of mental and practical culture, were the substratum of all his speeches. Enliven these solid properties with wit, humor, imagination, and those other ethereal gifts, which are the offspring of genius ; let the countenance, voice, and action all correspond, and we have certainly a cause by no means out of proportion with the specific effect.

But these general powers, whether native or acquired, belong, in some degree, to all great orators. It was in their peculiar combination and exercise that Mr. Prentiss' individuality, as a public speaker, consisted. The first thing, undoubtedly, that impressed a stranger in listening to one of his characteristic speeches, was the absolute sincerity, depth and fervor of his personal convictions. Before he uttered a word, you felt, by his very look and air, that he was deeply in earnest—and no sooner had he opened his lips, than you knew it by the quick, responsive sympathy in your own bosom. Instantly, a mystic chain seemed thrown around you, and, at every new touch of his wizard hand, you found yourself instinctively drawing nearer and nearer to him ; your understanding becoming enthralled, and your heart-strings vibrating as if smitten by an unseen force. Such an effect upon his audience never failed to react upon

his own soul. A friend once said to him, "Prentiss, you always *mesmerize* me when you speak." He answered, "Then it is an affair of reciprocity, for a multitude always *electrifies* me!" When he saw before him, as he sometimes did, five, ten, or twenty thousand people, men, women, and children, gazing on him, as if spell-bound; or heard their terrific shouts of joy, it almost maddened him with excitement. "I feel at such times," he once said to me, "a kind of preternatural rapture; new thoughts come rushing into my mind unbidden, and I seem to myself *like one uttering oracles*. I am as much astonished at my own conceptions as any of my auditors; and when the excitement is over, I could no more reproduce them than I could make a world!"*

Closely allied to this deep earnestness was his perfectly natural manner of speaking. It would have been as impossible to associate with him rhetorical tricks and affectation, as to associate them with daylight, or with the vivid flash of lightning. They were utterly alien from his nature; although a passage occurs, now and then, in his reported speeches, which might lead to a contrary impression.

But though his manner of speaking was perfectly natural, it was, at the same time, like that of all consummate popular orators, eminently dramatic. With voice, tone, look, gesture, and motion, he acted as well as spoke his thoughts. This histrionic talent lent not a little of their charm to both his conversation and his public addresses. He never spoke to advantage when cramped for room. A large space, allowing ample scope to walk to and fro, seemed to give

* "For, consult the acutest poets and speakers, and they will confess, that their quickest and most admired conceptions were such as darted into their minds like sudden flashes of lightning, they knew not how nor whence; and not by any certain consequence or dependence of one thought upon another, as it is in matter of ratiocination." DR. SOUTH.

him a sense of freedom, and enabled him to address himself more directly to the different portions of his audience. There was almost as great eagerness to see his face as to hear his voice. When he spoke in Faneuil Hall, he was again and again interrupted by the cry, "Look this way!" "Prentiss, do turn round and look this way!" Sometimes he would single out one of his auditors, whose appearance indicated special interest or intelligence, and, eye to eye, argue, as if with him alone, the point under discussion. On one occasion, he was to speak in the eastern part of Mississippi. A gentleman of high character, from Georgia, chanced to be in the place, and was extremely eager to hear him. Mr. P. had hardly begun his address, when his eye caught that of the intelligent stranger, who was sitting on the platform. Immediately turning towards him, in the most graceful manner, he proceeded to address to him a large portion of his speech. Before its close, the old gentleman seemed transfixed. He afterwards declared that he never before heard or conceived of such a power! When highly excited, Mr. Prentiss had a marvellous faculty of expression through the countenance, especially if his feelings had not yet found vent in words. Mr. Thorpe thus alludes to this fact in his *Reminiscences:*

Although of medium height, there was that in the carriage of his head that was astonishingly impressive: it gave a wonderful idea of power. I shall never forget him on one occasion, when he rose at a public meeting (a political discussion) to reply to an antagonist worthy of his steel. His whole soul was roused—his high smooth forehead fairly coruscated. He remained silent for some seconds, and only *looked.* The bald eagle never glanced more fiercely from his eyrie; it seemed as if his deep, dark-gray eye would distend until it swallowed up the thousands of his audience. For an instant the effect was painful; he saw it and smiled, when a cheer burst from the admiring multitude that fairly shook the earth.

He had a sweet, clear voice, rather improved than impeded by a slight lisp; and he had trained it to such power and compass, that it could be distinctly heard at an immense distance. Probably that of Whitefield was hardly more capacious. Although perfectly natural, his elocution and the whole management of his voice indicated severe discipline. Such excellence could never have been reached without much study and observation. He was, at times, an exceedingly vehement, but never violent speaker; and his tone, gestures, and whole aspect varied incessantly with the varying sentiments, passions, and phases of his subject.*

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* The following reflections upon the oratory of Patrick Henry, by the late venerated Dr. Archibald Alexander, are in so many points applicable to the subject of this memoir, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting them.

"On the retrospect of so many years, I may be permitted to express my views of the extraordinary effects of Henry's eloquence. The remark is obvious, in application not only to him, but to all great orators, that we cannot ascribe these effects merely to their intellectual conceptions, or their cogent reasonings, however great; these conceptions and reasons, when put on paper, often fall dead. They are often inferior to the arrangements of men whose utterances have little impression. It has, indeed, been said, both of Whitefield and of Henry, that their discourses, when reduced to writing, show poorly by the side of men who are no orators. Let me illustrate this, by the testimony of one whom I remember as a friend of my youth. General Posey was a revolutionary officer, who was second in command, under Wayne, in the expedition against the Indians; a man of observation and cool judgment. He was in attendance on the debates of that convention, in which there were so many displays of deliberative eloquence. He assured me that after the hearing of Patrick Henry's most celebrated speech in that body, he felt himself as fully persuaded that the constitution, as adopted, would be our ruin, as of his own existence. Yet subsequent reflection restored his former judgment, and his well-considered opinion resumed its place.

"The power of Henry's eloquence was due, first, to the greatness of his emotion and passion, accompanied with a versatility which enabled him to assume at once any emotion or passion which was suited to his ends. Not less indispensable, secondly, was a matchless perfection of the organs of expression, including the entire apparatus of voice, intonation, pause, gestures, attitude, and indescribable play of countenance. In no instance did he ever indulge in an expression that was not instantly recognized as nature itself; yet some of his penetrating and subduing tones were absolutely peculiar, and as inimitable as they were indescribable. These were felt by every hearer, in all their force. His mightiest feelings were sometimes indicated and communicated by a long pause, aided by an eloquent aspect, and some significant use of his finger. The sympathy between mind and mind is inexplicable.

He was fully aware of the power of words, and their vital connection with the thought or sentiment which they embody. He derided the notion that it matters little *how* a man speaks, provided he be in earnest, and speaks to the point. Form and style he considered almost as essential to the popular orator as to the poet; and he cultivated both with great care. In this respect, he was, I think, quite generally misunderstood; his amazing facility of utterance naturally misleading his hearers. While all admired his inimitable diction, most persons supposed it to be purely a gift of nature; and certainly no man could ever have spoken as he did, unless to the manner born; but neither could any man ever speak as he did, without much discipline. As well might it be pretended that such a painter as Raphael, or such a sculptor as Thorwaldsen, attained his consummate excellence in virtue of mere native endowment. Oratory is as truly an art as sculpture, or painting; and perfection is no more attainable in the one than in the other, without patient and severe culture. Mr. Prentiss' whole life, from boyhood, was a school of oratorical discipline; his reading

"Where the channels of communication are open, the faculty revealing inward passion great, and the expression of it sudden and visible, the effects are extraordinary. Let these shocks of influence be repeated again and again, and all other opinions and ideas are, for the moment, excluded; the whole mind is brought into unison with that of the speaker; and the spell-bound listener, till the cause ceases, is under an entire fascination. Then, perhaps, the charm ceases, upon reflection, and the infatuated hearer resumes his ordinary state.

"Patrick Henry, of course, owed much to his singular insight into the feelings of the common mind. In great cases, he scanned his jury, and formed his mental estimate; on this basis he founded his appeals to their predilections and character. It is what other advocates do in a lesser degree.

"When he knew that there were conscientious or religious men among the jury, he would most solemnly address himself to their sense of right, and would adroitly bring in Scriptural citations. If this handle was not offered, he would lay bare the sensibility of patriotism. Thus it was, when he succeeded in rescuing the man who had deliberately shot down a neighbor; who, moreover, lay under the odious suspicion of being a tory, and who was proved to have refused supplies to a brigade of the American army."—[*See Life of Dr. Alexander*, p. 190.

when a child, his debating club in college, and his whole after career. And is it conceivable that language, the very instrument of his art, should never have been a matter of study? Was it mere untutored instinct that taught him to select his words, and fashion them into the goodly structure of clear, senseful, and impassioned utterance? Far from it. He sought out the best form both of thought and expression—not for the sake of show, but of practical effect. He held that it was impossible to speak too well to any audience, and that the impression would rarely fail exactly to correspond, *cæteris paribus*, with the genuine excellence of the speech in style and sentiment. In 1844 he told me that it almost pained him to write a common letter, he had become so scrupulous and particular in the choice of words; unless he was sure of having said what he wished to say in the most proper manner, he felt annoyed. The idea of excellence haunted him, even in such minute matters as writing a letter to a young friend, or making a speech to a gathering of backwoodsmen. His few manuscripts which remain, indicate slow composition; they contain numerous erasures, not merely of words, but of whole sentences. The last letter I ever received from him, though written in great weakness, shows his usual care in respect to style.

But no sooner had he laid down the pen and begun to speak than all hesitancy disappeared; the excitement of friendly discourse, but still more the presence of a popular assembly, seemed to put his mind in a glow, clarified his memory, gave him instant and absolute command of all his mental stores, whether of knowledge, reflection, or language; every sign of effort vanished, and all appeared as natural and easy as the flow of a crystal stream. It can hardly be doubted that his more important speeches were carefully premeditated; but not one of them was ever written; nor do I believe that a single passage in any one of them was

ever put on paper until after its delivery. A few leading points and landmarks were fixed in his memory: all the rest—language, style, imagery—was left to the excitement of the occasion.*

I do not recollect, either in conversation, or in a public

* The following skeleton of a lecture, delivered after his removal to New Orleans, in behalf of a charitable institution, is the only thing of the kind among his papers:

"THE TENDENCIES OF THE AGE—ITS PRACTICAL CHARACTER.

"1st. On the Physical.

"2d. On the Intellectual world.

"As to the first: Our advance is all practical, and at the expense of imagination, fancy, poetry, &c. *Natural philosophy has fixed everything*—the stars have no astrology, the trees no dryades, the streams no naiades, the moonlight no fairies; the old elements are destroyed; air consists of oxygen, nitrogen. We have analyzed everything: even in agriculture, the grass is a compound, the flowers owe their fragrance or their beauty to a little more alkali or a little less carbon. . . . . Electricity, mechanism, steam, navigation, &c. All the sciences have but taken us behind the scenes, made us acquainted with nature's laboratory, and given us a full command of all her powers. We can do all but create. The tendency of all this is utilitarian, selfish, money-making.

"2d. Physical discovery in the arts of printing, in continual communications of commerce, travelling, &c., has equalized knowledge, but has made no improvement in moral character.

"The same bad passions exist—greater selfishness, greater love of gold (note its existence in all ages; but especially the fury that now prevails; note the very necessity of such a charity as the present).

"Equality of knowledge has improved political ideas, and produced political equality, but has not diminished selfishness, nor love of gain, its natural accompaniment.

"The tendencies of the age are, then: 1st. Utilitarianism—a complete knowledge of physical nature, and control of her powers. 2d. Democracy. 3d. Individual selfishness, especially love of money.

"The consequences are a greater amount of physical enjoyment, but a gradual deterioration of the fine arts, especially of poetry, from the destruction of its sources.

"The Graces alone remain of all the ancient Mythology.

"God teaches us as we teach our children; performs the most difficult parts of the lesson, but still leaves us something to do ourselves.

"How easily He could have bridged the ocean! yet He left us to do it; and hence man invented ships. How readily He could have deepened the channel of the Mississippi, or raised the banks; but He left us to make levees. So He might have healed all evils, cured all cares, and dried widows' tears, and orphans' sighs; made the poor equal to the rich, &c., &c., &c.; but this He left to us, thinking, doubtless, it would be a pleasure for us. He explained most of the *puzzle of life*, but left to our own skill the fitting of a few pieces."

speech, ever to have heard him recall, change, or misuse a word. One evening, during the winter of 1836–7, before he had become known outside of Mississippi, he told me that, although he could not enter a drawing-room and accost a lady, without trembling and mental embarrassment, he was utterly unconscious of any such feeling in appearing before a public assembly, however large or grave. He illustrated the point after this odd manner, "If I were, of a sudden, to be transported to Old England, and let down, through the roof, into the assembled House of Lords, I doubt not, the instant I found myself on my legs, I could begin a speech to their Lordships on any subject, *which I understood*, without the slightest hesitation or embarassment."*

This absolute command of his mental forces never appeared more surprising than in the case with which he would frame images, or institute comparisons for the illustration of his subject. The loftier and bolder his metaphors, the more successful they were. His figures never halted or limped: the minutest parts were as distinct as the general outline. He told me himself, the year before his death, that he never found any difficulty in completing or carrying out the most complicate metaphor. However high he might attempt to soar, he always reached the point, and then descended at his pleasure. This arose, probably, in part from the intensity of his passion, which is ever a law to itself; partly from the vital energy, that *vis logica*, by which his intellect was so highly charged. Every faculty of his mind seemed to act with the unerring method and instinct of nature. His great speeches were the living products of his reason and imagination. There was nothing

* I recall only three or four occasions on which he ever spoke to me about his oratory; and then it was in answer to specific and somewhat urgent questions of mine. He seemed as devoid of all vain-glory on the subject as if he had been dumb.

vague or dead about them. What has been so finely said of his early pastor, Dr. Payson, might be said with equal justice of him: "His thoughts flew from him in every possible variety and beauty, like birds from a South American forest."

The main peculiarities of his oratory have been so fully brought out in the preceding narrative, that it seems needless further to dwell upon them here. There is one point, however, which deserves to be more distinctly mentioned. It is thus referred to by Judge Wilkinson: "Your brother's talent at *ridicule* was, in my opinion, the most effective of all the weapons in his intellectual armory. When pathos, logic, and invective, all failed of their effect, he never failed to accomplish his purpose (if this purpose was to overwhelm and baffle an opponent) by means of ridicule. It was the arrow of the archer in the hands of Locksley, whenever *he* deigned to use it. His ridicule did not irritate and madden, but it *overpowered*. The victim sunk completely transfixed, or went away abashed and cowed. It seemed to disarm ferocity of its power to strike, as the constrictor with an effort crushes the bones of the buffalo, and leaves him prostrate and powerless. I never knew any ridicule like the ridicule of Prentiss."

While Mr. Prentiss was largely indebted to nature, and not a little to circumstances of time or place, for his success as a public speaker, he was hardly less indebted to books. In this respect he possessed a great advantage over many of his eloquent contemporaries. His classical training, and his familiarity with the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, and the other great models of English speech, imparted a richness, strength, and felicity to his diction, as well as a dignity to his sentiments, that could hardly be attained by any other process. But it was the rich stores, gathered from the wide field of fiction and romance, which, perhaps,

contributed most of all to the charm of his public speeches, as of his conversation. The old classical mythology was as familiar to him as the history of his native land; so, too, was the whole region of chivalry; while his acquaintance with modern novels, from Fielding and Smollet to Scott, Thackeray and Dickens, was complete. And he always said, that a classical allusion, a quotation from the poets, or an illustration from Scott, was as good in the backwoods of Mississippi as in the halls of Congress. He was very fond of resorting to Æsop's Fables, and applying their wise conclusions to the passing events and politics of the day.* He would sometimes do it with great effect. In truth, no kind of knowledge came amiss to him, when addressing the multitude.

* Mr. Thorpe, in describing one of the menagerie scenes already mentioned, thus refers to his skill in subsidizing the animal creation:—

"The 'boys' decided that PRENTISS should 'next time' speak from the top of the lion's cage. Never was the menagerie more crowded. At the proper time, the candidate gratified his constituents, and mounted his singular rostrum. I was told by a person, who professed to be an eye-witness, that the whole affair presented a singular mixture of the terrible and the comical. PRENTISS was, as usual, eloquent, and, as if ignorant of the novel circumstances with which he was surrounded, went deeply into the matter in hand, his election. For awhile, the audience and the animals were quiet—the former listening, the latter eyeing the speaker with grave intensity. The first burst of applause electrified the menagerie; the elephant threw his trunk into the air, and echoed back the noise, while the tigers and bears significantly growled. On went PRENTISS, and as each peculiar animal vented his rage or approbation, he most ingeniously wrought in his habits, as a fac-simile of some man or passion. In the meanwhile, the stately king of beasts, who had been quietly treading the mazes of his prison, became alarmed at the footsteps over his head, and placing his mouth upon the floor of his cage, made everything shake by his terrible roar. This, joined with the already excited feelings of the audience, caused the ladies to shriek, and a fearful commotion for a moment followed. PRENTISS, equal to every occasion, changed his tone and manner; he commenced a playful strain, and introduced the fox, the jackal and hyena, and capped the climax by likening some well-known political opponent to a grave baboon that presided over the 'cage with monkeys.' The resemblance was instantly recognized, and bursts of laughter followed, that literally set many into convulsions. The baboon, all unconscious of the attention he was attracting, suddenly assumed a grimace, and then a serious face, when PRENTISS exclaimed: 'I see, my fine fellow, that your feelings are hurt by my unjust comparison; and I humbly beg your pardon.' The effect of all this may be vaguely imagined, but it cannot be described."

But, after all, his great power, as a popular orator, lay in the truth and importance of the sentiments which he uttered. He never addressed the people merely to please them or himself. From the beginning to the end of his political career, his aim seemed to be to imbue the popular mind with just and patriotic sentiments. Whatever the particular topic of his address, and however varied the style in which he presented it, a few simple fundamental principles formed the staple of nearly all his speeches. Nothing could be further removed from the "empty insincere speech," chastised with such a righteous "growl of impatient malediction" by Carlyle in his *Stump-orator*.*

This will appear sufficiently evident from a brief analysis of his political character and opinions.

Every reader of this Memoir must see that Mr. Prentiss had little taste for public life. What he said on returning home from Congress, in 1838, expressed a feeling which only increased in strength to the end of his days: "The ancient gladiator pursued a more enviable occupation than that of the modern politician." Indeed, with all his power of language, words seemed to fail him, when he strove to give vent to his opinion of the selfishness, profligacy, low cunning, trickery, blackguardism, and calumnious spirit, which at once debased and envenomed American politics. The abominable stories circulated respecting himself, during his first

* "Probably there is not in nature a more distracted phantasm than your common-place eloquent speaker, as he is found on platforms, in parliaments, on Kentucky stumps, at tavern dinners, in windy, empty, insincere times like ours. The 'excellent stump-orator,' as our admiring Yankee friends define him, he who in any occurrent set of circumstances, can start forth, mount upon his stump, his rostrum, his tribune—his place in parliament, or any other ready elevation—and pour forth from there his appropriate, 'excellent speech,' his interpretation of the said circumstances, in such manner as poor, windy mortals round him shall cry bravo to—he is not an artist I can much admire, as matters go! Alas! he is, in general, merely the windiest mortal of them all, and is admired for being so, into the bargain."

canvass in Mississippi, would hardly be credited, were these pages to be soiled by mentioning them. And this was only a specimen of the moral ruffianism with which some of the purest and most distinguished statesmen in the country were habitually treated. He was, however, very far, especially during his later years, from attributing the evil exclusively to one party. He thought it grew out of general causes and infected, more or less, all parties. In truth, he came to have little faith in professional politicians of any denomination. "Selfishness, meanness, and corruption," he writes to a friend, in 1848, "constitute the stock in trade of nine-tenths of the politicians of the present day." He deemed it one of the worst signs of the times, that such men so often sway the political influence of a whole State, and even creep into high places in the Nation. How often, too, do they verify the lines of the poet:

> "A falcon, towering in his pride of place,
> Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed."

No: it is not to mere politicians we must look for the correction of public evils and the perpetuity of the Republic.

His partyism, as Mr. Wise remarks, was little else than "pure patriotism." To mere party interests and plans as such, he felt a singular indifference; indeed, he often poured contempt upon them. He was a very decided, even enthusiastic Whig; but it was solely because he believed that party embodied most fully the true principles and ancient spirit of the government. His grandfather was a disciple of Washington; his father belonged to the old Republican party; and Whig principles, as expounded by Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster, he seemed to regard as essentially the same with genuine Washingtonian Republicanism. His political sympathies and antipathies were certainly very strong; but they were free to an extent truly remarkable, from the gall

of personal animosity. He would attack the party and principles of his opponents in the most severe, not to say unwarrantable, terms; but the instant his speech was over, he would take *them* by the hand with all the cordiality of friendship. I speak now generally; for in the case of Repudiation he did, certainly, carry his public hostility into private life. Mr. Wise observes that, intimate as were their relations, he never heard Mr. P. "utter a scandal." I do not remember ever to have heard him speak in *personal* dislike of any politician in the country, North or South, Whig, Democrat, Free-Soiler, or Abolitionist; nor is there a single expression of the sort in the whole range of his correspondence. Although writing often in the very heat of party conflicts, he scarcely ever alludes to persons. When denied his seat in Congress, for example, by the casting vote of Mr. Polk, and thus compelled to go through the toil of a second canvass, he gave vent to his indignation in public addresses; but not the slightest allusion to the point occurs in any of his letters. How full an ordinary politician would have been of the injury done, as he conceived, to his individual rights and dignity! It was this entire freedom from the petty passions that made Mr. Prentiss so beloved by many Democrats. It seemed against his very nature to do a mean thing. But not only was he above the littleness of indulging in personal animosities against his political opponents; he was capable of admiring what was noble in them. He had a profound dislike, for example, to many features of Gen. Jackson's character and public policy. His earlier popular addresses were fiercely anti-Jackson; and he always regarded "Old Hickory" as having initiated a system of party politics highly disastrous to the best interests of the country. But, for all that, he could not deny his greatness; and there was something in the firmness and moral heroism with which he "took the responsibility," and carried through his measures,

that even excited his admiration. In giving names to the party-leaders of the day, as he loved to do, Gen. Jackson was "the old Tennessee Lion." Long before his death his political feelings were so softened, that he could hardly be regarded any more as a party man. Patriotic solicitude seemed to have absorbed nearly all his remaining interest in politics. The old issues, indeed, were already fast passing into oblivion.

The history of the two great national parties that ruled the country during a quarter of a century, from the accession of Gen. Jackson, in 1829, to the passage of the Nebraska bill, in 1854, is yet to be written. Time will, perhaps, give judgment that both were partly right and partly wrong; that each committed grave errors, and that, on the whole, neither would have done so much good, or so little permanent evil, without the help of the other. At any rate, such names as Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Silas Wright, and Zachary Taylor—not to mention others—demonstrate that this eventful period in the annals of the Republic was not barren of wise, patriotic, or great men.

Without saying more of his mere party relations, it may not be without interest to state some of his views on general politics.

There were, probably, few men of his age in the United States, who had reflected more upon the philosophy of government, or who had studied with greater care the peculiar structure and genius of our own. He delighted to discuss the abstruse questions which relate to the organization and ultimate principles of the social system. His discourse on such topics was rendered peculiarly instructive and interesting by the happy manner in which he would illustrate his views. The mere abstract argument was almost lost sight of "in the life, freshness, and practical value of

his remarks and notices ; truths, plucked as they are growing, and delivered to you with the dew on them ; the fair earnings of an observing eye, armed and kept on the watch by thought and meditation."* Early in his public career he was obliged to discuss some of the fundamental principles of our American system of government. But Repudiation, more than any other subject, gave impulse and definite shape to his political reflection. The doctrine was new in this country, and in some of its aspects, new in the world. The manner in which it was broached, compelled its opponents to argue before the people elementary truths of the social system ; truths which the wildest innovation had never before called in question. In expounding these truths on the stump, as also in observing the practical causes and effects of Repudiation, he became most deeply impressed with the perilous fallacies on the subject of liberty and popular sovereignty, referred to in a previous chapter. But his whole public life tended to the same result. From his youthful eulogy on Lafayette to the election of Gen. Taylor, I have found no record of a single speech or address, in which is not perceptible an ardent devotion to some important principle of political morality.

He laid great stress upon a right view of the *form* of our government. It is, he contended, a representative republic in contradistinction to a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a simple democracy. By this is not meant that there is not in it a large democratic element ; for it is acknowledged, on all hands, that the people are the ultimate source of political power. Nor is it denied that there is an aristocratic element ; for the whole structure of the Senate, for example, is based upon this principle. Nor is the monarchical element excluded ; for the President of the United

* Coleridge's Tribute to his friend Thomas Poole.

States, during his four years of office, actually wields more power than is now wielded by the royal Executive of Great Britain. He is, in fact, a quadrennial elective monarch, so far as that term indicates government carried on by the will of one man. The prime minister of the British Crown would not dare to retain office a day, in the face of a large hostile majority in Parliament. No King or Queen of England would require him to do so. But the American Executive can retain or dismiss his cabinet, in spite of any congressional majority; in spite of any majority short of two-thirds in both houses, he can veto the entire legislation of the country. All this the fundamental law allows him to do, and it is a power which he is constantly exercising. Our government, then, is constituted on peculiar principles; it is a mixed system, in which, however, the popular or democratic element forms the base, and is the ruling power. But a pure or absolute democracy it is not; nor can it become such without self-destruction. So far from being based exclusively upon population, or controlled by a numerical majority, it is, in important respects, quite the reverse. Nothing could well be further from the theory of such a democracy than many provisions of the Organic Law. The Federal Constitution is almost as different from the theory of government by a numerical majority as it is from a monarchy. Under it, Delaware, with a population of some 100,000, is as strong in the Senate (and all national legislation must pass the Senate) as New York, with some 3,000,000. In electing a President, Delaware has three votes, and two of them are given to her wholly irrespective of population. Or, should the election of President go into the House of Representatives, then Delaware, with her 100,000, has the same voice as New York with her 3,000,000. This is only a specimen of the numerical inequalities which mark the whole framework of the government. Such is the Constitution of the

United States; but surely it is playing with words to call this democracy.* Taking this view of the matter, Mr.

* The reader will find this whole subject discussed with great ability in Mr. Calhoun's Essay on the Constitution and Government of the United States. Soe *Calhoun's Works*, vol. 1, p. 168, *et seq.* Here follow a few paragraphs: "It is not an uncommon impression, that the government of the United States is a government based simply on population; that numbers are its only element, and a numerical majority its only controlling power; in brief, that it is an absolute democracy. No opinion can be more erroneous. So far from being true, it is, in all the aspects in which it can be regarded, pre-eminently a government of the concurrent majority; with an organization more complex and refined, indeed, but far better calculated to express the sense of the whole (in the only mode by which this can be fully and truly done, to wit, by ascertaining the sense of all its parts) than any government ever formed, ancient or modern. Instead of population, mere numbers, being the sole element, the numerical majority is, strictly speaking, excluded, even as one of its elements, as I shall proceed to establish by an appeal to figures—beginning with the formation of the Constitution, regarded as the fundamental law which ordained and established the government; and closing with the organization of the government itself, regarded as the agent or trustee to carry its powers into effect."

After going through this examination, he proceeds: "It thus appears, on a view of the whole, that it was the object of the framers of the Constitution, in organizing the government, to give to the two elements, of which it is composed, separate, but concurrent action; and, consequently, a veto on each other, whenever the organization of the department, or the nature of the power would admit: and, when this could not be done, so to blend the two as to make as near an approach to it, in effect, as possible. It is also apparent that the government, regarded apart from the Constitution, is the government of the concurrent, and not of the numerical majority. But to have an accurate conception how it is calculated to act in practice, and to establish, beyond doubt, that it was neither intended to be, nor is, in fact, the government of the numerical majority, it will be necessary again to appeal to figures.

"That, in organizing a government with different departments, in each of which the States are represented in a twofold aspect, in the manner stated, it was the object of the framers of the Constitution, to make it more, instead of less popular than it would have been as a government of the mere numerical majority—that is as requiring a more numerous instead of a less numerous constituency to carry its powers into execution—may be inferred from the fact, that such actually is the effect. Indeed, the necessary effect of the concurrent majority is to make the government more popular; that is, to require more wills to put it in action, than if any one of the majorities of which it is composed, were its sole element, as will be apparent by reference to figures.

"If the House, which represents population, estimated in federal numbers, had been invested with the sole power of legislation, then six of the larger States, to wit, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Tennessee, with a federal population of 8,216,279, would have had the power of making laws for the other twenty-four, with a federal population of 7,971,325. On the other hand, if the Sen-

Prentiss maintained that, so far as democracy meant government based upon the will of the people, in the sense of a numerical majority, the whole theory is false, unconstitu-

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ate had been invested with the sole power, sixteen of the smallest States—embracing Maryland as the largest—with a federal population of 3,411,672, would have had the power of legislating for the other fourteen, with a population of 12,775,932. But the Constitution, in giving each body a negative on the other, in all matters of legislation, makes it necessary that a majority of each should concur to pass a bill, before it becomes an act; and the smallest number of States and population, by which this can be effected is six of the largest voting for it in the House of Representatives, and ten of the smaller, uniting with them in their vote, in the Senate. The ten smaller, including New Hampshire as the largest, have a federal population of 1,346,575; which, added to that of the six larger, would make 9,572,852. So that no bill can become a law, with less than the united vote of sixteen States, representing a constituency containing a federal population of 9,572,852, against fourteen States, representing a like population of 6,614,752.

"But, when passed, the bill is subject to the President's approval or disapproval. If he disapprove, or, as it is usually termed, vetoes it, it cannot become a law unless passed by two-thirds of the members of both bodies. The House of Representatives consists of 228, two-thirds of which is 152, which, therefore, is the smallest number that can overcome his veto. It would take ten of the larger States, of which Georgia is the smallest, to make up that number—the federal population of which is 10,853,175—and, in the Senate, it would require the votes of twenty States to overrule it, and, of course, ten of the larger united with ten of the smaller. But the ten smaller States have a federal population of only 1,346,575, as has been stated, which, added to that of the ten larger, would give 12,199,748, as the smallest population by which his veto can be overruled, and the act become a law. Even then, it is liable to be pronounced unconstitutional by the judges, should it, in any case before them, come in conflict with their views of the Constitution—a decision which, in respect to individuals, operates as an absolute veto, which can only be overruled by an amendment of the Constitution. In all these calculations, I assume a full House, and full votes, and that members vote according to the will of their constituents."

Having analyzed the law regulating the election of President, he adds: "From what has been stated, the conclusion follows, irresistibly, that the Constitution and the government, regarding the latter apart from the former, rest, throughout, on the principle of the concurrent majority; and that it is, of course, a Republic—a constitutional democracy, in contradistinction to an absolute democracy—and that the theory which regards it as a government of the mere numerical majority rests on a gross and groundless misconception. So far is this from being the case, the numerical majority was entirely excluded as an element, throughout the whole process of forming and ratifying the Constitution; and, although admitted as one of the two elements, in the organization of the government, it was with the important qualification, that it should be the numerical majority of the population of the *several States*, regarded in their corporate character, and not of the whole Union, regarded as one community. And, further than this, it was to be the numerical majority, not of their entire population, but of their federal population, which, as has been shown,

tional, and fraught, like all fundamental error, with endless mischief.

It was the fortunate position of the sage founders of our political system, that they could not construct a government upon the theory of simple democracy; the materials, with which they were compelled to build, utterly precluded it. But it was also their wisdom that they *would* not have done so, if they could. A purely democratic Constitution would have rendered impossible that balance of powers and those manifold checks, which they all deemed essential to a stable and free government.

Along with right views of the form of our government, Mr. Prentiss attached the highest importance to right views of its practical methods. It is throughout a *representative* system. That the people are the source of political power,

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is estimated artificially, by excluding two-fifths of a large portion of the population of many of the States of the Union. Even with these important qualifications, it was admitted as the less prominent of the two. With the exception of the impeaching power, it has no direct participation in the functions of any department of the government, except the legislative; while the other element participates in some of the most important functions of the executive, and, in the constitution of the Senate, as a court to try impeachments, in the highest of the judicial functions. It was, in fact, admitted, not because it was the numerical majority, nor on the ground that, as such, it ought, of right to constitute one of its elements—much less the only one—but for a very different reason. In the Federal Constitution, the equality of the States, without regard to population, size, wealth, institutions, or any other consideration, is a fundamental principle; as much so as is the equality of their citizens, in the governments of the several States, without regard to property, influence, or superiority of any description. As, in the one, the citizens form the constituent body; so, in the other, the States. But the latter, in forming a government for their mutual protection and welfare, deemed it proper, as a matter of fairness and sound policy, and not of right, to assign to it an increased weight, bearing some reasonable proportion to the different amount of means which the several States might, respectively, contribute to the accomplishment of the ends for which they were about to enter into a federal union. For this purpose, they admitted what is called federal numbers, as one of the elements of the government about to be established; while they were, at the same time so jealous of the effects of admitting it, with all its restrictions, that, in order to guard effectually the other element, they provided that no State, without its consent, should be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate; so as to place their equality in that important body, beyond the reach even of the amending power."

and ultimately sovereign, is admitted on all hands; nobody disputes this—it is the universal creed of the country. But do the people immediately exercise this sovereign power? Far from it. It is exercised by their representatives. How could it be otherwise, in a large country like ours? A direct government by the people is literally impossible; and it would be a hasty, impulsive, and anarchical thing, if it were possible. How immeasurably more excellent is the actual system of our Constitution! The legislative will of the people is represented in the two houses of Congress. The executive will finds its organ in the President. The judicial will acts through the Supreme Court and its branches. Thus the sovereign power, originally in the people, is, by their own free act, distributed through the several departments of the Federal Government, to be exercised in the name and for the good of the whole.

Our government is, therefore, at once popular and legal, or constitutional. It is a government of the people, inasmuch as they are the source of its power, as they ordained it, and its functionaries are their agents and representatives. It is a government of law, inasmuch as the people themselves have virtually sworn to obey it, are bound by its authority, and cannot alter or even amend it, except in accordance with its own provisions.* But there is nothing

* A few paragraphs from the Constitution will explain this statement: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."—Preamble to the Const.

"All *legislative* powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."—Art. 1. sec. 1.

"The *executive* power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."—Art. 2, sec. 1.

"The *judicial* power of the United States shall be vested in one Supreme Court, and in such inferior courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and esta-

humiliating in this subjection of the people to law ; it was a voluntary act ; and, like the obedience of the soul to God, is the highest possible expression of their freedom and self-government.

This sovereignty of law in our system of government is its conservative principle, and a chief safeguard of the popular liberties. The highest form of political offence in the United States—the true *crimen lesæ majestatis*—is treason against the Law ; for in that are wrapt up the holiest interests, rights, and immunities of the Nation.

It follows very clearly from the foregoing premises, that the *will of the people* is not found in the popular assemblages, or masses, however numerous. They may express the feelings, wishes, opinions, or even deliberate judgment of a majority of the people ; but all these must pass through a distinct constitutional and legal process, ere they become stamped with the authentic signature of the sovereign popular will. In other words, the will of the people is expressed, and can be ascertained, only through the modes prescribed by themselves in their fundamental law. Every act of the Legislature, performed in the exercise of its legitimate powers, is the will of the people ; so is every such act of the Executive ; and so is every decision of the Courts of Justice. In no other way can the people know their own will. This is our republican idea of popular sovereignty, and any other is as lawless and unconstitutional as it is un-American.

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blish. The judges, both of the supreme and inferior courts, shall hold their offices during good behavior."—Art. 3, sec. 1.

"This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof ; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the SUPREME LAW of the land ; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."—Art. 6, sec. 2.

At the very outset of his political life, Mr. Prentiss encountered wholly different views of our government from these ; views based upon the notion that it is a simple democracy ; that its controlling element is that of a numerical majority, or "the democracy of numbers," as it was called ; and that the will of the people is *immediately* sovereign, and is found in "the masses," or primary assemblies, irrespective of constitutional or legal forms. Referring to such views in his speech on admitting delegates from the new counties, he says : "I look upon them with horror and alarm. I denounce them as disorganizing and revolutionary. They are the same doctrines which once prevailed in the Jacobin Clubs of Paris, during the worst times of the French Revolution ; and, if generally adopted, will produce the same results here that marked their progress through that bloody period. Sir, I do not know what gentlemen mean by the forms of the Constitution, or what right they have to say that one part is not as substantial as another. Did gentlemen, when they took an oath to support the Constitution, make a mental reservation that they might violate its forms ? What is the criterion, and who is to be judge of what is form and what substance ? If what is form can be violated with impunity, I fear the instrument will soon share the fate of the painting which the artist invited his friends to criticise. They all pronounced it beautiful, a *chef d'œuvre* of the art. He then requested that each one would take a pencil, and strike from it such portion as he deemed objectionable. They did so, and the mortified artist found no vestige of his picture remaining."

These manly sentiments he had occasion again to express in his speeches on the Mississippi contested election. But it was in discussing the points embraced in Repudiation and the Dorr Rebellion, as has been remarked, that he became

most deeply impressed with the fatal tendency of the doctrines in question.

Holding these views, he maintained that our American system of free government is proper to ourselves ; springing out of our ancestral spirit, laws, customs, race, ancient franchises, social institutions, and peculiar circumstances. Civil liberty always has been and must be an historical growth ; it cannot be improvised. Unless organized in wise and fixed methods and institutions, it will remain, at the best, but a grand sentiment and aspiration.. There are in the world as many ideas and kinds of liberty as there are of religion. There is the old English liberty. There is the French liberty. There is what they call liberty in Central and South America. There is the popular constitutional American liberty ; partly our Anglo-Saxon birthright ; in part the spontaneous, though slow, growth of our native soil ; partly wrought out for us by the heroic deeds, statesmanlike deliberation, wisdom, and patriotic spirit of our venerated sires. It is a composite system ; at once practical and comprehensive ; stable and progressive ; fruitful in generous, humane ideas, and yet far removed from visionary extravagance. It is not absolutely perfect, and yet it is, in theory at least, so near to such perfection as is attainable in the present state of human nature, that we may well regard it both with gratitude and admiration. But let us never confound it with alien systems ; nor attempt to inoculate it with the spirit of political propagandism, or of an abstract, impracticable philanthropy. Especially let us guard its great securities—the Union and the Constitution ; these are to American liberty what the body is to the soul.

Such being his views of American liberty as virtually bound up with the Union, Constitution and Laws, it is not surprising that he laid the utmost stress upon the *patriotic*

sentiment. He thought the love of liberty, inherent in every American bosom, was in danger of becoming severed from love to the Union and Constitution. Yet, without the latter, the former could only become hostile to the institutions of the country. What but a strong and intelligent patriotism can hold together the American people? Certainly the Union is a rope of sand, unless it be cherished and consecrated in their hearts. But his sense of the inestimable worth of the Union has appeared so fully already, that it would be a waste of words to say more on the point here. For the same reason, it is needless to dwell upon his opinions respecting the importance of universal education, as indispensable to the perpetuity of our Republican Institutions.

As to the actual working of the government, he saw one of the chief causes of alarm in the vast and corrupting influence of *Executive Patronage*. This tremendous power had come to be wielded exclusively as an instrument of party management and success. It had thus degraded the Executive office, and infected with a deadly poison the whole politics of the country. "In states," remarks Burke, "there are often some obscure and almost latent causes, things which appear at first view of little moment, on which a very great part of their prosperity or adversity may essentially depend." Or, to use Mr. P.'s own language: "It is from small and apparently insignificant attacks, that governments and constitutions fall. A leak, no larger than a spear head, will sink the most gallant ship that ever swam the ocean. A crevasse may be made, even by a reptile, which will let in the waters of the Mississippi, till whole counties are inundated." The history of Executive Patronage affords a striking illustration of these remarks. At first it was exercised with so much care and moderation that nobody

discerned in it the germ of that anti-republican, despotic and ruthless thing, that

Monstrum horrendum, ingens, informe, cui lumen ademptum,

which it has now become. During the eight years of Washington's administration, he removed only nine officers. The elder Adams dismissed ten during his Presidency. Mr. Jefferson, during his eight years, only removed forty-two—although a large portion of the officeholders were strongly opposed to his election. Mr. Madison, during his eight years, dismissed but five officers. Mr. Monroe, during his two terms, only nine. John Quincy Adams dismissed but two. General Jackson, during the first year of his Presidency, removed *two hundred and thirty officers;* in other words, he removed about three times as many in one year as all his predecessors had dismissed in forty. Before the close of his eight years, he had made a pretty "clean sweep" throughout the country. Gen. Jackson, therefore, may be said to have inaugurated the present system; and he has been followed by all his successors. The effect upon the political morals of the people, and upon the character of the government, has been unspeakably debasing. The President, instead of keeping himself aloof from the petty strife and intrigues of party, as befits the Chief Magistrate of a great nation, is little more than the autocratic dispenser of government "spoils." For months after his inauguration, his name is mixed up with all the ignoble office-seeking cliques of his party throughout the Union; the telegraph is chiefly occupied in reporting what postmaster, or other insignificant subordinate, he has removed or appointed; Washington City becomes infested with a huge army of office-seekers, flushed with the sense of their patriotic services, fawning or bullying to get their rewards, and actually imperilling the President's life by their importunities. It is

a spectacle almost as pitiable and debasing as can be found in the history of Rome in her worst days. What must be the tendency of the system but to deteriorate the manners, morals, and whole manhood of the nation!*

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* The subject of Executive Patronage attracted much attention during the Presidency of John Quincy Adams. In 1826 an elaborate Report on the subject was presented to the Senate by a committee, of which Col. Benton was chairman. That model republican, Nathaniel Macon, of North Carolina, Mr. Van Buren, afterwards President, R. M. Johnson, of Kentucky, Mr. White, of Tennessee, and Mr. Hayne, of South Carolina, were among its members. Here follows an extract from this memorable report. It is truly prophetic:

"With the 'Blue Book,' they will discover enough to show that the predictions of those who were not blind to the defects of the Constitution, are ready to be realized; that the power and influence of *Federal* patronage, contrary to the argument in the 'Federalist,' is an overmatch for the power and influence of *State* patronage; that its workings will contaminate the purity of all elections, and enable the Federal Government, eventually, to govern throughout the States, as effectually as if they were so many provinces of one vast empire.

"The whole of this great power will centre in the President. The King of England is the 'fountain of honor;' the President of the United States is the source of patronage. He presides over the entire system of Federal appointments, jobs, and contracts. He has 'power' over the 'support' of the individuals who administer the system. He makes and unmakes them. He chooses from the circle of his friends and supporters, and *may* dismiss them; and, upon all the principles of human actions, *will* dismiss them, as often as they disappoint his expectations. His spirit will animate their actions in all the elections to *State* and *Federal* offices. There may be exceptions; but the truth of a general rule is proved by the exception. The intended check and control of the Senate, without new constitutional or statutory provisions, will cease to operate. Patronage will penetrate this body, subdue its capacity of resistance, chain it to the car of power, and enable the President to rule as easily, and much more securely with, than without the nominal check of the Senate. If the President was himself the officer of the people, elected by them, and responsible to them, there would be *less* danger from this concentration of all power in his hands; but it is the business of statesmen to act upon things as they are, not as they would wish them to be. We must then look forward to the time when the public revenue will be doubled; when the civil and military officers of the Federal Government will be quadrupled; when its influence over individuals will be multiplied to an indefinite extent; when the nomination by the President can carry *any man* through the Senate, and his recommendation can carry any *measure* through the two Houses of Congress; when the principle of public action will be open and avowed; *the President wants my vote, and I want his patronage; I will vote as he wishes, and he will give me the office I wish for.* What will this be, but the government of one man? and what is the government of *one* man, but a monarchy? Names are nothing. The nature of a thing is in its substance, and the name soon accommodates itself to the substance. The first Roman Emperor

One effect of this enormous power of Executive Patronage, as already intimated, is to stimulate and intensify all the bad propensities incident to party politics. It is enough

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was styled Emperor of the *Republic*, and the last French Emperor took the same title; and their respective countries were just as essentially *monarchical* before, as after the assumption of these titles. It cannot be denied or dissembled but that the Federal Government gravitates to the same point, and that the election of the Executive by the Legislature quickens the impulsion."

The reader will also find some most impressive remarks on this subject in Mr. Calhoun's speeches. No one can read them without admiring their manly boldness, independence, and patriotic spirit; all the more because Mr. Calhoun's practice corresponded with his theory. They deserve to be re-printed, in the form of tracts, and circulated broadcast among the people. It is a wonder, indeed, that this method of instructing the public mind on important questions of political morality has not been more generally used. I feel that I shall be doing a service to the young men of the country who may read this Memoir, by quoting some passages from Mr. Calhoun. Here is an extract from his speech on the bill to repeal the Four Years' Law, made in February, 1835, in which he contends that the power of dismissal is not lodged in the President, but is subject to be controlled and regulated by Congress:

"The construction for which I contend," he remarks, "strikes at the root of that dangerous control which the President would have over all who hold office, if the power of appointment and removal without limitation or restriction were united in him. Let us not be deceived by names. The power in question is too great for the Chief Magistrate of a free state. It is in its nature an imperial power, and if he be permitted to exercise it, his authority must become as absolute as that of the autocrat of all the Russias. To give him the power to dismiss at his will and pleasure, without limitation or control, is to give him an absolute and unlimited control over the subsistence of almost all who hold office under Government. Let him have the power, and the sixty thousand who now hold employment under Government would become dependent upon him for the means of existence. Of that vast multitude, I may venture to assert that there are very few whose subsistence does not, more or less, depend upon their public employments. Who does not see that a power so unlimited and despotic over this great and powerful corps must tend to corrupt and debase those who compose it, and to convert them into the supple and willing instruments of him who wields it? And here let me remark," said Mr. C., "that I have been unfairly represented in reference to this point. I have been charged with asserting that the whole body of office-holders is corrupt, debased, and subservient; with what views, those who make the charge can best explain. I have made no such assertion, nor could it with truth be made. I know that there are many virtuous and high-minded citizens who hold public office; but it is not, therefore, the less true that the tendency of the power of dismissal is such as I have attributed to it; and that if the power be left unqualified, and the practice be continued as it has of late, the result must be the complete corruption and debasement of those in public employment. What," Mr. C. asked, "has been the powerful cause that has wrought the wonderful changes which history teaches us

of itself to create a gang of demagogues in every city, and a knot of them in every village of the land. The bane of free, popular governments has always been their tendency to

have occurred at different periods in the character of nations? What has bowed down that high, generous, and chivalrous feeling—that independent and proud spirit which characterized all free states in rising from the barbarous to the civilized condition, and which finally converted their citizens into base sycophants and flatterers? Under the operation of what cause did the proud and stubborn conquerors of the world, the haughty Romans, sink down to that low and servile debasement which followed the decay of the republic? What but the mighty cause which I am considering; the power which one man exercised over the fortunes and subsistence, the honor and the standing of all those in office, or who aspire to public employment? Man is naturally proud and independent; and if he loses these noble qualities in the progress of civilization, it is because, by the concentration of power, he who controls the government becomes deified in the eyes of those who live or expect to live by his bounty. Instead of resting their hopes on a kind Providence and their own honest exertions, all who aspire are taught to believe that the most certain road to honor and fortune is servility and flattery. We already experience its corroding operation. With the growth of executive patronage and the control which the Executive has established over those in office by the exercise of this tremendous power, we witness among ourselves the progress of this base and servile spirit, which already presents so striking a contrast between the former and present character of our people.

"It is in vain to attempt to deny the charge. I have marked its progress in a thousand instances within the last few years. I have seen the spirit of independent men, holding public office, sink under the dread of this fearful power; too honest and too firm to become the instruments or flatterers of power, yet too prudent, with all the consequences before them, to whisper disapprobation of what in their hearts they condemn. Let the present state of things continue—let it be understood that none are to acquire the public honors or to obtain them but by flattery and base compliance, and in a few generations the American character will become utterly corrupt and debased."

Again:

"We have," said Mr. C., "lost all sensibility; we have become callous and hardened under the operation of these deleterious practices and principles which characterize the times. What a few years since would have shocked and roused the whole community, is now scarcely perceived or felt. Then the dismissal of a few inconsiderable officers, on party grounds as was supposed, was followed by a general burst of indignation; but now the dismissal of thousands, when it is openly avowed that the public offices are the 'spoils of the victors,' produces scarcely a sensation. It passes as an ordinary event. The present state of the country," said Mr. C., "was then anticipated. It was foreseen, as far back as 1826, that the time would come when the income of the Government and the number of those in its employment would be doubled—and that the control of the President, with the power of dismissal, would become irresistible. All of which was urged as an inducement for reform at that early period; and as a reason why the administration then

engender such political vermin; a race of men, who, having no principles, make it their business to play upon the ignorance, passions, and prejudices of the people, that they may

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in power should be expelled, and those opposed to them should be elevated to their places. But now when this prophecy has been realized, we seem perfectly insensible of the danger to which the liberty and institutions of the country are exposed. Among the symptoms of the times," said Mr. C., "which indicate a deep and growing decay, I would place among the most striking, the difference in the conduct of those who seek public employment before and after their elevation. In the language of the indignant Roman, they solicit offices in one manner and use them in another. And this remark was not more true of that degenerated state of the noblest of all the republics of antiquity, than it is of ours at the present time. It is not only," said Mr. C., "a symptom of decay, but it is also a powerful cause. When it comes to be once understood that politics is a game; that those who are engaged in it but act a part; that they make this or that profession, not from honest conviction or an intent to fulfill them, but as the means of deluding the people, and through that delusion to acquire power, when such professions are to be entirely forgotten;—the people will lose all confidence in public men; all will be regarded as mere jugglers—the honest and the patriotic as well as the cunning and the profligate; and the people will become indifferent and passive to the grossest abuses of power, on the ground that those whom they may elevate under whatever pledges, instead of reforming, will but imitate the example of those whom they have expelled."

Again, in some remarks in the Senate, May 14th, 1846, he says:

"To go back to the beginning;—there was, originally, a controversy whether the removing power belonged to the President of the United States or not; and, after a long discussion, it was decided to be incidental to the Executive—in my opinion, a most erroneous decision, and fraught with great mischief. During that discussion —if my memory serves me right—Mr. Madison expressed the opinion that the removal of a meritorious officer not guilty of any neglect of duty, by the Executive, would be an impeachable offence. Substantially, that was acted upon till a very late period; and the overthrow of that principle, to use the expression of the Senator from North Carolina, has laid the foundation of the 'spoils system;' for it was a much more easy thing, after the expiration of four years, to drop an officer and send another to his place, than to turn him out. From that, the principle has extended and extended till, literally, our Government has become a government of spoils. Your Presidential elections are governed by it, and it has conducted this Government in the downward road to ruin. The evil tendency of this principle has been often described on the floor of Congress. It has come to this, that every four years there is a revolution of parties in the United States. You have an expenditure, annually, say of $25,000,000, and in the four years of $100,000,000. This is a vast sum in the hands of the Executive; and, on the spoils principle, it becomes a great prize to be obtained at every Presidential election. Now, the officeholders have the greatest interest to maintain their position;—and those who desire office, on the other hand, have the strongest motives to struggle hard in getting a President. Thus the Presidential election becomes a conflict between these two parties; those

win their votes. But the whole system of Executive Patronage is calculated to increase a hundred-fold these hypocritical patriots and *tail of the nation.*

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out of office being the most numerous, prove the strongest, and the office expectants defeat the officeholders. A system of conflict is thus produced utterly destructive of every sound political principle, and of all political integrity. We could not do a wiser thing than to put an end to it. The first step to cure the evil is to assume the power abandoned improperly. The power of removal is a congressional power, to be regulated by law. Not that Congress have the power, but they have the right to regulate it by law. This is not a new idea of mine. In 1835 or 1836,—I think it was in 1836,—I moved a committee to take into consideration the subject of Executive patronage. One of my recommendations was to put an end to this four years' law. If it be desirable to remove every four years, say so. If it be desirable that the accounts should be closed every four years, and the officer should be turned out, say so: and you will get to the commencement of the putting down of a system which, if you do not put down, it will put you down."

Mr. Webster here rose, and expressed his concurrence with Mr. Calhoun in the view that the removing power does not belong, constitutionally, to the President, but should be regulated by Congress. Mr. Calhoun afterwards closed with the following weighty sentences:

"A large mass of society enter into politics as a mere mode of obtaining a livelihood. When I affirm that already as many persons live upon the expenditures of this Government, as the half of the great population engaged in the cultivation of the cotton lands, the extent of the evil may be imagined. The income of the Government is almost equal to half of all the income derived from cotton property. Now, we know what a large mass of our population is engaged in the cultivation of cotton;—and yet, through the action of this Government, as many persons are living upon the public revenue. But this is not all. Put the half of the income of the cotton property into a lottery, to be drawn every four years: so many men will go into that lottery in hopes of drawing a prize, that when the victory is achieved, not one in forty can be rewarded. What is the result? The thirty-nine disappointed, and who fought only for the 'spoils,' turn round in process of time—when political degeneracy takes place, as it will—to the other side, and seek the next turn of the wheel when another lottery is drawn. Thus they go on. Can any wise man—can any patriotic man—can any genuine friend of human liberty, look at such a spectacle without the most poignant regret? He must be little informed, indeed, in politics who does not know all this; and knowing all this, he will be asserting one of the most untrue and monstrous propositions on the face of God's earth, who says that this is a 'popular doctrine.' What! 'a popular doctrine?' It is the very reverse. It is the doctrine to create a king, and to annihilate liberty. As for myself, I have maintained on this subject an uniform position. When the act of 1820 was passed, it passed through Congress without my knowledge. The moment I heard of its passage, I pronounced to a friend that that law was one of the most dangerous ever passed, and that it would work a great revolution. I have always stood upon that ground; and yet I know that this position is not a popular position. But I speak the truth when the truth ought to be spoken. The Presidential elec-

No man in the Union, probably, had studied demagoguism with a more observing eye, had a deeper horror of it, or was more in the habit of denouncing it in his public addresses, than Mr. Prentiss. I once read to him Coleridge's masterly portrait of the demagogue in the second *Lay Sermon*. He listened with rapt attention, and as the sketch proceeded, disclosing one feature after another, of the miserable impostor, as "a deceiver," "an incendiary," "a malignant," "a tyrant," "a hypocrite and a slanderer;" then showing the way in which the press, tongue, and other means are subsidized by him for executing his *villany*, he pronounced the analysis perfect. It was the very same creature he had so often encountered in Mississippi—head and tail—loathsomeness—poison-bag and rattle; but, well as he knew the wretch, never, he said, could *he* have described it with such matchless skill.*

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tion is no longer a struggle for great principles, but only a great struggle as to who shall have the spoils of office. Look at the machinery! A convention nominates the President—in which, not unfrequently, many of the representatives of the States join in a general understanding to divide the offices among themselves and their friends. And thus they make a President who has no voice at all in the selection of officers! These things are known; and I say it is surprising that, being known, gentlemen who advocate the opposite doctrine assume to be democratic. No. The democratic doctrine is precisely the reverse of what they affect to teach. It goes against patronage and influence, and gives no more patronage than what the strict necessity of the case requires. Patronage wisely and judiciously dispensed on the part of the Executive, may have a salutary effect in giving concentration and strength to the Government; but this wholesale traffic in public offices for party purposes is wholly pernicious and destructive of popular rights. Properly applied the policy is admirable; but as soon as the Government becomes the mere creature of seekers of office, your free institutions are nearly at an end. In this matter I have been uniform and sincere—whether right or wrong, time will disclose. But the evil has commenced. It is going on. It needs no prophet to foresee the end. I speak not in the language of prophecy; but who, judging from the past, can avoid the conviction that unless the proper remedy be applied, the overthrow of your political system is inevitable?"

* In this connection I cannot refrain from citing a remarkable passage from Aristotle, in which that profound observer gives the genesis of the demagogue. He is describing one of the spurious forms of democracy, and the extract will show that the theory of government by the resolves of mass meetings, instead of law, is, by no means, a modern invention.

Such are some of the views which, in conversation and in his public addresses, Mr. Prentiss used to express respecting the nature and peculiar perils of our political system.

"Ἕτερον δ' εἶδος δημοκρατίας, τἆλλα μὲν εἶναι ταὐτά, κύριον δ' εἶναι τὸ πλῆθος καὶ μὴ τὸν νόμον. Τοῦτο δὲ γίνεται, ὅταν τὰ ψηφίσματα κύρια ᾖ, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὁ νόμος· συμβαίνει δὲ τοῦτο διὰ τοὺς δημαγωγούς· ἐν μὲν γὰρ ταῖς κατὰ νόμον δημοκρατουμέναις οὐ γίνεται δημαγωγός, ἀλλ' οἱ βέλτιστοι τῶν πολιτῶν εἰσιν ἐν προεδρίᾳ· ὅπου δ' οἱ νόμοι μή εἰσι κύριοι, ἐνταῦθα γίνονται δημαγωγοί. Μόναρχος γὰρ ὁ δῆμος γίνεται σύνθετος εἷς ἐκ πολλῶν· οἱ γὰρ πολλοὶ κύριοί εἰσιν, οὐχ ὡς ἕκαστος, ἀλλὰ πάντες. Ὅμηρος δὲ ποίαν λέγει οὐκ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι πολυκοιρανίην, πότερον ταύτην, ἢ ὅταν πλείους ὦσιν οἱ ἄρχοντες, ὡς ἕκαστος, ἄδηλον. Ὁ δ' οὖν τοιοῦτος δῆμος, ἅτε μόναρχος ὢν, ζητεῖ μοναρχεῖν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἄρχεσθαι ὑπὸ νόμου, καὶ γίνεται δεσποτικός· ὥστε οἱ κόλακες ἔντιμοι. Καὶ ἔστιν ὁ τοιοῦτος δῆμος ἀνάλογον τῶν μοναρχιῶν τῇ τυραννίδι· διὸ καὶ τὸ ἦθος τὸ αὐτὸ, καὶ ἀμφὼ δεσποτικὰ τῶν βελτιόνων. Καὶ τὰ ψηφίσματα, ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ τὰ ἐπιτάγματα· καὶ ὁ δημαγωγὸς καὶ ὁ κόλαξ οἱ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀνάλογον· καὶ μάλιστα δ' ἑκάτεροι ἰσχύουσιν οἱ μὲν κόλακες παρὰ τυράννοις, οἱ δὲ δημαγωγοὶ τοῖς δήμοις τοῖς τοιούτοις. Αἴτιοι δέ εἰσι τοῦ εἶναι τὰ ψηφίσματα κύρια, ἀλλὰ μὴ τοὺς νόμους, οὗτοι, πάντα ἀνάγοντες εἰς τὸν δῆμον· συμβαίνει γὰρ αὐτοῖς γίνεσθαι μεγάλοις, διὰ τὸ τὸν μὲν δῆμον εἶναι κύριον, τῆς δὲ τοῦ δήμου δόξης τούτους. πειθεται γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος τούτοις. Ἔτι δὲ οἱ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐγκαλοῦντες τὸν δῆμόν φασι δεῖν κρίνειν· ὁ δέ ἀσμένως δέχεται τὴν προκλησιν· ὥστε καταλύονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἀρχαί. Εὐλόγως δὲ ἂν δόξειεν ἐπιτιμᾶν ὁ φάσκων τὴν τοιαύτην εἶναι δημοκρατίαν, οὐ πολιτείαν· ὅπου γὰρ μὴ νόμοι ἄρχουσιν, οὐκ ἔστι πολιτεία."

Politica, Lib. iv. chap. iv.

The following is an English version slightly paraphrased:—

"Another kind of democracy is where, other things being the same, the multitude, and not the law, bears sway. This comes to pass when, instead of the law, the mere resolves of the popular assembly are sovereign; and *this* is the work of the demagogues; for popular governments, in which the constitution and laws are supreme, afford no place for demagogues; but the best citizens are there in authority (literally, *in the presidency*). Where, however, the laws are not sovereign, demagogues spring up. In such a government the people are a sort of many-headed monarch; for the many rule not as each, but as all. (*Fit enim princeps solus imperium obtinens* (*monarchum dicunt Græci*) *populus unus ex multis concretus et conflatus; nam penes multos summa rei publicæ potestas est non ut singulos, sed ut omnes.*) Whether Homer had in mind this kind of government, when he censures a plurality of rulers; or whether he meant that, in which many individuals bear sway, is not clear. Now, such a people being, in truth, a monarch, will, of course, play the king; and inasmuch as it is controlled by no

But deeply as he lamented the evils of the times, and much as he thought some features of our government were misunderstood, he was no prophet of evil. His political disappointments never made him despair of the Republic. On the contrary, he indulged in the grandest prophecies respecting its coming glories. It was this intense devotion to his country, and these patriotic hopes, which gave such a charm often to his political conversation.*

While he had little confidence in mere politicians, he cherished a deep faith in the substantial intelligence, virtue, and good sense of the real American people. He believed they would not prove recreant to the high trust committed

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law, readily becomes despotic. Hence, flatterers are in honor. A democracy of this description bears the same analogy to a popular government, based upon the supremacy of law, that a tyranny bears to the legitimate forms of monarchy. In both the *animus*, or moral character, is the same; both exercise despotism over the better class of citizens; and the resolves of mass meetings are in the one, what edicts and decrees are in the other. The demagogue, too, and the flatterer of the tyrant, bear the closest analogy, they are, indeed, at heart, the same; and these have the principal power; each in their respective forms of government, court favorites with the absolute monarch, and demagogues with a people such as I have described. The demagogues are, in fact, the guilty authors of this degeneracy of popular government, by referring everything to the mere pleasure of the people, without respect to law or right. Thus they aggrandize themselves, and become mighty; by ruling the popular opinion, they rule the State; for the multitude obeys them! If they wish to overthrow an upright magistrate, they accuse him not before the law, but before the people, which, they say, ought to be his judge; the people, well pleased, entertain the wrongful proposal, and thus all just authority is dissolved!

"He, who should blame us for calling such a democracy a *State*, would, certainly, not censure without good reason; *for where laws do not govern, there is no State.*"

* In summing up Mr. PRENTISS'S public life, I should say that his absorbing sentiment was patriotism. The pleasantest reminiscences I have of him are, when circumstances have thrown me in his company, in some retired place, and I have listened to his hopes and aspirations for the prosperity of his native land. With the talent of an *improvisatore*, he drew more vivid pictures of the glory that awaited its destiny in the *Future*, than ever did an Italian child of song call up when speaking of the *Past*. Those great hopes of his, so worthy of a true American heart, so inspiringly expressed, now linger in my memory, as the sweet outpourings of a voice from the "spirit-world."—*Thorpe's Reminiscences.*

to them by Providence; that they would still carry forward the work begun by their worthy sires, and transmit to posterity, unimpaired, our noble heritage of Law, Liberty, Union, and Social Order. His sentiments on this point cannot be more happily expressed, or this chapter better concluded, than by citing the well-known lines of another gifted son of Portland:

Thou, too, sail on, O ship of state!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its tears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what master laid thy keel,
What workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, each sail, each rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge, and what a heat,
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock.
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee:
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee!

LONGFELLOW.

Personal Traits—His Disregard of Money—His Generosity—His Interest in Young Men and Kindness to them—Character of his Friendships—Sympathy with the Poor, the Sick, and Afflicted—Letters addressed to him by Strangers—His Domestic Life.

If the preceding pages have not quite failed of their end, the general features of the life and character of the subject of this memoir need no further elucidation. That he was a true man—brave, generous, and high-minded; that he was a sincere lover of his country, a most able lawyer, and an orator of rare power; that he was a model of filial and domestic piety—if all this is not evident already, the attempt to make it so were, surely, a vain task. But no general impression respecting S. S. Prentiss could be exactly just; for everything about him was specific and *sui generis*. His talents, his virtues, his very faults, had upon them his individual stamp; if one did not know them as they appeared in *him*, one did not really know them. This is, doubtless, true of every man of great and original character; nature never makes two such men precisely alike; every genuine manifestation of their peculiar life, whether intellectual or practical, will differ somewhat from all similar manifestations. Shakespeare's unique genius is visible in almost every line of his immortal dramas; and how intense is the individuality which shines through every verse of Milton? Who would ever mistake a speech of Webster for one of Clay, although on the same subject, and express-

ing the same sentiments? And even in the highest forms of spiritual life, we find this endless diversity in unity; the most saintly virtues unfolding with varied beauty in patriarch, evangelist, and apostle.

It will be the aim of this chapter to gather up a few scattered threads of Mr. Prentiss' life, and work them into the tissue of our narrative. While illustrating his disregard of money, his interest in young men, just commencing professional life, or struggling against adverse fortune, the character of his friendships, his sympathy with the poor, the sick, and afflicted, and other personal traits, they will serve, also, it is hoped, to render more vivid and distinct the total impression of his character:

If he was not covetous of place or rank (writes Judge Wilkinson), he was even less so of riches. All who knew him, knew and said, that money he did not know the uses of. True, he knew that its commonest function was *to buy:* but *how much* was to be *given* for anything, he never stopped to calculate. In the summer of 1842 he visited Yazoo city, passing the time of his stay at my house. He had, at a previous court, recovered a judgment against the Corporation of the city for two thousand and five hundred dollars. "I have come," he said, "to ask you to tell me who of your citizens will buy this judgment of mine against the town. The Corporation cannot pay it just now, and I must have one thousand dollars. I do not care for more. Will you offer it for that?" This I declined doing, and remonstrated with him against such a course as culpable prodigality, assuring him that the debt was perfectly secure, and that the judgment would be paid, when the execution was returnable—in about six months. "No," said he, "I must have one thousand dollars. I would rather have that sum now than five thousand at the end of six months. I have a young brother in Germany, a student of divinity; he wants this amount, he must have it and shall." He sold the judgment a few days afterwards for about one-half its value.

The following is an extract from a letter, addressed to me, in Germany, in the spring of 1840. The writer of it has since become well known in the literary world :

I am, as my date has informed you, in the city of Vicksburg; what is more, I am a *dweller* in this place, and what will surprise you still more, I am in the law office of your distinguished brother, and a member of the bar of Mississippi! And now, "season your admiration for awhile," as your favorite Hamlet hath it, while I discourse to you in what wise these things have come to pass. The last time we were together, was in October of '38, in the city of New York, on the morning I left for the West. * * * * In December last, I was advised to pass the winter in the South for my health. I accordingly dropped a few lines to your brother, introducing myself to him as a friend of yours, and desiring some information relative to the practice of law in this State. Much to my surprise and gratification, your brother devoted a whole sheet in reply to me, and its contents were kind and encouraging; he referred to you, and proffered me most generously his friendship and aid, should I visit Mississippi. At about this time some inducements were offered me to go to Louisiana; and I accordingly replied to your brother, acknowledging his kindness, but declining a visit to Vicksburg for sundry *prudential* reasons more interesting to myself than to any one else, to wit: I had no library, but little familiarity with my profession, and still less was I burdened with pecuniary resources. To this letter your brother, to my great surprise, immediately replied, proffering me the use of his office and library; and, moreover, any pecuniary aid which my occasions might require, until I had established myself in my profession, and could repay his liberality. I need hardly repeat, that such a proposal from one, who was then a perfect stranger to me, caused me no little astonishment, unused as I had ever been to generosity of the kind. I determined, at once, to visit your brother, and if, upon acquaintance with me personally, he thought proper to renew his proposal, to accept it on sundry considerations. I need not tell you that I *like* your brother; I

cannot tell you *how much* I like him. I am as much charmed by his fervid, generous, frank disposition as I am dazzled by his surpassing abilities.

Another old friend, now a distinguished lawyer in the Southwest, writes in 1851 :

I had heard through a paragraph in a New Orleans paper, of your intention; and had I not received your letter, should have written to you, offering my aid in any way in your behalf; indeed, though myself quite ill when the distressing news of your brother's death shocked us, my first impulse was to write at once to you, and express as strongly as feeble words could, how much I sympathized with your greater grief, and how heavy-hearted we all felt at what was not alone our individual, but a national bereavement. Yet *what could I say* that would not have been cold compared with what I wanted to say, and that would not have appeared like intruding upon a grief so solemn and deep as yours? I always thought, and to the last, even when life seemed to all, manifestly waning, that your brother was destined to *great things* in this life, and would achieve them. I looked upon him as an intellectual Saul among men; superior in native endowment to any one whom I had ever personally met; with an originality, power, and depth of thought entirely peculiar to *him*. His intellect did not seem of the same sort with ordinary men's. I mean, it did not appear like the usual faculties of men highly developed or possessed in an extraordinary degree, but it always seemed to me to be of *different material;* and I could never think or feel that his star was to set without shedding its light not only over the present living world, but also into the distant and dark future, instructing and delighting people yet unborn. And when his death was too certainly announced, I had the feeling, like your own, as though I had lost something of my own individuality; some part of myself torn away; not to be replaced. But I will not indulge this train of thought or feeling. It is not what you ask for. I proceed, therefore, to give you a few anecdotes * * *

Just before your brother went to Congress, Gen. —— came into the office, and told him he should want the use of his name while he would be at Washington, in the settlement of his (Gen. ——'s) affairs, but would not use it beyond *thirty thousand dollars*. Your brother took some blank sheets of paper, wrote his name across them several times, and handed them to Gen. ——. Whether the latter ever used them, I do not know. I afterwards spoke of the occurrence to your brother, and of the great risk he run, if the paper should be misused or lost. In reply he said, he had the most unbounded confidence in ——, and besides, if he knew it would be used to double the extent proposed, it would make no difference: *Gen. —— had been kind to him, when he first came to the State, and he could never forget it.*

To him money had, at this time, absolutely no value; it slipped through his fingers like water; it seemed to me as if the idea that he should ever *need* it for any purpose of life, never occurred to him. During this period, while riding one day, he met a little boy weeping. He asked him his name. "Andrew Jackson," said the lad, with a new burst of tears; "Poor fellow!" said your brother, handing him a gold eagle of the Jackson stamp, "poor fellow, no wonder he cries, afflicted with such a name!" Remember this was in 1836, when Jackson was an abomination to the Whigs.

When I came to Mississippi, young and inexperienced, and with nothing to commend me to *his* kindness or regard, he lavished favors upon me which were the beginning of my prosperity and fortune. He gave me the privilege, free of cost, to use his office; he allowed me the amplest use of his then extensive law library; he threw in my way all the business he could command; introduced and recommended clients to me; left his whole unfinished law business in my hands for settlement and adjustment; showed me how to bring the first suit I ever brought; and at all times, in all ways, freely gave me his personal aid and legal advice and assistance without ever an expression of impatience or dissatisfaction, or making me feel in the slightest degree, that I was trespassing on his time or

attention. This to me, a *boy* of nineteen, was a tower of strength. It gave the people confidence in me, which, to this day, I have not lost, and it laid for me broadly and strongly a deep foundation for after success, on which I have built what I have built. You yourself must remember how, when in the winter of 1836–7, you thought of going to Cuba, and wanted me to go, your brother offered me five hundred dollars and my expenses to accompany you; and with what familiarity, freedom, and unbounded kindness he gave me the benefit of his counsel, professional reputation, and position. I must not omit to mention one other proof of his liberality. In October, 1837, when he was about to start for Congress, I told him I might, during his absence, need the use of *his name* in buying a residence for myself (for I expected to and did get married the next month). He sat down, and gave me his *letter of credit* for ten thousand dollars, then worth so much money. I never used it, and have it to this day; but it was none the less noble and kind in him. These are things I can never forget, and though I did all in my power to be of service to him and was of great service to him, *he* never knew the intensity of interest with which I watched his progress; the delight I experienced when success smiled on his efforts; or the despair I felt when darkness and destruction fell upon his prospects.

While deluded by the fictitious value of property here into the notion that he was immensely rich (for it was soon proved to be a delusion, and soon dispelled by the total prostration of business and banks, the fall in real estate, and the involvement in litigation of "*the Commons*," in front of the city, on which he had already expended enormous sums—one hundred and fifty thousand dollars at least—and which was all, with the improvements, taken out of his possession), during this period he lavished his money and credit with a boundless and, in truth, reckless hand. Ruin, long resisted and struggled against, at length came upon him; yet, in the midst of his difficulties, and I record it as a fact that I shall ever feel grateful to him for, and which I have often since thought proved the innate goodness and *considerateness* of his nature, he never sought, nor in any

the slightest degree hinted at getting the aid of *my name*, then worth something, to procure indulgence from his creditors, and that *time*, which he verily believed would bring relief to his embarrassments. He knew a word of his would involve me and mine with his affairs; and *he never spoke it*.

It would be an injustice to his memory not to state, what can be well authenticated, that up to the period, when he thought himself immensely wealthy, he was most scrupulously and minutely exact in all that related to his pecuniary obligations; never contracting a debt without reluctance, or failing to meet it at any sacrifice. And in the later years of his life, while overburdened by a load of old debts, a similar carefulness in contracting new ones, and in paying them when incurred, began to mark him. He kept a book in which were registered these new debts; and paid them as soon as possible.

It were easy to multiply anecdotes like the above, until the reader's very credulity would be tasked to believe them. It would require a little volume to mention in detail the instances of his princely generosity, his prodigal expenditures and the almost insane good nature with which he allowed his credit * and his money to be coaxed away. That in this last matter there was moral weakness as well as contempt of gold, it were folly to deny. Some, who by their petty arts and flatteries, obtained thousands of his money, and tens of thousands in the use of his name, were selfish

* I believe I wrote you, in the summer, of my own involvements and of the almost absolute impossibility of raising money in Mississippi. I have become myself deeply embarrassed in security debts, and have had to strain every nerve to prevent the utter sacrifice of all my most valuable property. It seems to me that every friend, for whom I endorsed, has failed, and thrown the burden on my shoulders. I shall have to pay, and have paid, between fifty and one hundred thousand dollars. What I have not paid I have had to mortgage property for, and thus place it beyond my control. Still, if I am not much disappointed, I think I shall be able to let you have a couple of thousand dollars in the winter, or early in the spring. You may rest assured that no effort of mine shall be wanting to assist you to the extent of my power. Where I cannot aid you, I can, at least, sympathize with you. * * But it is useless to complain of the past; the future I shall use more judiciously.—*Letter to his Eldest Brother, January* 4, 1841.

parasites ; drawn to him, that, like vampires, they might, as indeed they did, suck his life's blood. When the evil day came upon him, their golden promises and admiration melted into thin air—they turned and fled. His real friends were well aware of his infirmity and of the peril to which it was exposing him ; but he himself was blind, until sharp experience tore away the delusion.

No bitter recollections, however, of past ingratitude or imposition, ever had power to chill the generous impulses of his nature, or to shut his hand, when one whom he had regarded as a friend, asked him to open it. A proof of this, at once characteristic and painful, occurred only a short time before his death. During his last visit North, in the summer of 1849, he left his family at Newburyport, and made a flying trip to New York. At the Astor House he fell in with an old acquaintance, well known in the Southwest, who, for some cause or other, had fallen short in funds, then indispensable to him. He appealed to Mr. Prentiss for relief ; solemnly promising in word and by writing, that the loan should be promptly returned on the receipt of money that would be due him from the Government, and certainly paid in a few months. His appeal was successful, and put into his hands the very funds which were to take Mr. P. and his family home to New Orleans. The voyage was actually made with borrowed money. He could conceal nothing from those he truly loved, and one of his first acts, on reaching Newburyport, was to confess what he had done. He seemed ashamed and mortified at his own weakness ; "But what could I do?" he exclaimed, appealingly, "—— was an old friend, and, poor fellow ! he threatened to blow his brains out if I did not let him have the money !" *

* This threat was, probably, sincere ; for the unhappy man has since destroyed himself. In a letter, acknowledging Mr. P.'s kindness, he writes : "I do not generally regard very considerably a loan I make or receive. But never before had

His kindness to young men just entering upon professional life, has already been illustrated. An instance of his kindness to young men of worth, struggling against adverse fortune, and of their feelings towards him, shall now be given. It is but one of scores that might be related, each of which should be no less beautiful and characteristic:—

It was with no ordinary feelings (writes an old friend in the Southwest, a man of varied erudition), that I received your letter. How many reminiscences were awakened by it of dear old Gorham, of Alma Mater, and of *him*, who was the principal subject of your communication! Of him what can I say, but that I revered him? Others admired him, were astonished at him; so was I, but there are other feelings mingling with my recollections of him, which can yield, indeed, in intensity, to those of his own kindred, but to no others. Since I heard the melancholy tidings of his untimely departure (and had he lived to a ripe old age, it never could have seemed to me that he had lived long enough), it has appeared to me that a part of the world is gone. Surely, no one has lived in this country, who, mingling so little with the affairs of the nation, has stamped his memory so deeply on the public mind. Such a volume as you contemplate, however successful, could never contain a tithe of the eulogium which rises from the heart to the lips everywhere in the Southwest, whenever the name of PRENTISS is mentioned.

I do not really believe I could furnish you many anecdotes of your brother which you have not already heard. Indeed, I have heard many which I considered of doubtful authenticity, for he is a traditional character all over Mississippi, their Cid, their

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my recklessness involved me to an extent where my pride was threatened with so severe a blow. Consequently, for extricating me from this press, I thank you more deeply than the amount of the loan would ordinarily warrant." A few weeks later he writes: "I am off for sea to-day, and wish to send you a word of greeting. * * I write to say a word about the loan you made me. * * And now farewell! In the vicissitudes of life, whatever may be your fate, you will bear along with you my warmest wishes for your prosperity and advancement."

Wallace, their Cœur de Lion, and all the old stories are wrought over again and annexed to his name. I saw much less of him than you suppose, for in the fall of 1837 I left Vicksburg, and I never met him but two or three times afterwards. The last time was in the spring of 1838, soon after which I fell back upon my old drudgery of teaching, and have been buried almost ever since. The tenor of your letter, however, recalled to my memory the last letter I ever received from him—and I enclose a complete copy of it. I would send you the original, but it is too precious a relic. Let me explain the circumstances which gave rise to it. In the improvidence of boyhood, I had construed more literally than was exactly proper, the kind offer he had made to me of assistance; further experience in the world had opened my eyes to my error, and I also felt mortified at the reflection that I had done nothing worthy of a *protégé* of his. I felt unwilling that he should be reminded of my existence, until I had, by my unaided efforts, become able to repay him what I owed him. At the time I addressed him the letter which brought this reply, I was, or imagined myself, in a condition to liquidate the claim, of the precise amount of which I was ignorant, and wrote him accordingly, at the same time, by way of apology for my conduct, frankly confessing the motives. His answer you have here before you.

The kind, affectionate tone of his letter requires no comment, and its length, upwards of two pages, would never be regarded by any, who knew the utter sincerity of the writer, as merely an elaborate compliment. Another thing is observable in the original, showing how wholly unfounded was the vulgar notion (but vulgar minds can never understand such a man), that all he said or did was the result of sudden impulse. There are several erasures for the purpose of substituting a more appropriate word, a thing not to be wondered at in a letter addressed to a distinguished personage, but not to have been expected in a letter to an obscure boy, if, as many suppose, he was in the habit of thinking and speaking at random, and if all his splendid strokes were but so many fortunate hits. This may seem to be dealing in minute things, but it was from minute fragments that a Cuvier reconstructed the giants of the Preadamite world.

The letter referred to is as follows :—

VICKSBURG, *February*, 25, 1841.

MY DEAR SIR:

On my return yesterday from Natchez, I received yours of the 7th inst., and was both gratified and pained at its contents; gratified to hear from you, to learn the place of your residence (of which I was entirely ignorant), and to learn also that your talents and honorable enterprise were not entirely without reward, though an inadequate one. But I was pained at the reason of your long silence—at the knowledge that you had suffered the trifling assistance, which it afforded me pleasure to render you, to weigh upon your mind, or cause you one moment of disquietude. Why, if there was any obligation, it was on my side. I owed a hundred times more to the son of your father, than the little service which I have been able to extend to you. You are wholly mistaken if you suppose that any unkind or unfavorable thought, in relation to you, ever crossed my mind. On the contrary, I have often wished to see you, and have made repeated and vain inquiries after you, for the purpose of acting towards you as I would towards my own brother. For more than two years I have lost trace of you, and supposed you had left the State. It would have afforded me sincere pleasure at any portion of that period, as it now would, and always will, to extend to you the hand of a friend.

* * * * *

As for the trifling account between us in relation to pecuniary matters, I have never thought of it, and know not how it stands. You shall not appropriate any of your hard-earned means to that object. If you ever have more money than you have use for, look about for some young man, with nothing but his education and his honest enterprise to commence the world with, and if you owe me anything, pay it to him, and, as we lawyers say, this shall be a receipt in full. Come, come, R——, pluck up spirits; this world has much in store for you. You have eaten the bitter fruit first; the sweet must follow. It is better so than to have the order reversed. When you can get

sufficient leisure, come down to Vicksburg and see me. I shall be gratified to see you, and if I can at any time, in any way, serve you, I trust you will not hesitate to command me.

Sincerely and truly your friend,

S. S. PRENTISS.

P. S. Let me hear from you whenever your leisure and inclination will permit.

It is not surprising that such a man should have been greatly admired by his young countrymen, or that the narrower circle of them, who enjoyed his personal acquaintance and regard, or had been the recipients of his kindness, should have felt towards him a sentiment of enthusiastic love and devotion. Among his papers are letters from nearly every College in the United States, informing him of his election to honorary membership in the various literary or debating societies, connected with such institutions.

There was in all his genuine friendships a wonderful strength and nobleness of feeling. He adhered to them with unswerving fidelity, and could never be brought to acknowledge a fault in any one he loved. Even the deepest political prejudice melted away in the ardor of his personal attachments. Few things ever called forth from him more bitter denunciation than what he regarded as the treachery of Mr. Tyler; he exhausted the stores of his wit and sarcasm in philippics against that gentleman's course; but when the adhesion to Mr. Tyler of one of his intimate friends, a prominent member of the Whig party,* was the matter of discourse, his lips were sealed in silence, or he quickly changed the subject.

Indeed (writes Judge Wilkinson), it was scarcely possible to

* Mr. Wise, now Governor elect of Virginia.

shake the loyalty of his friendship, when once formed; and I never knew of his receiving the least requital for service rendered to a friend. Just before he removed to New Orleans, I sent him the record of a law suit, in which I was personally interested, and by which I had recovered a considerable sum. I wished him to argue the cause in the appellate court (my adversary having appealed from the decision of the court below), and I took this opportunity of offering him, in a manner which I thought would be the most indirect and delicate, pecuniary compensation for service he had rendered me on a far more important occasion. I requested the gentleman by whom I sent the record (Mr. W. P. Miles) to say to Mr. P., that if the judgment of the court below was sustained, he must divide the amount with me equally. "Tell him," said your brother, "that I will oblige him in any way I can, but upon this condition, that he never again offers me compensation for what I may have done, or may hereafter do for him."

His friendship had, indeed, a sort of ideal life. Like the plighted love of woman, it clung to its chosen objects, and cast over them the mantle of charity, even when they had proved themselves most unworthy. Nor did it deem itself relieved from its grateful offices by the intervention of death. Among his papers is a package of letters, addressed to him from a distant State by the grandfather and guardian of three little orphans, interspersed with letters breathing an almost filial affection, from the children themselves. This correspondence begins in 1838, and ends with a most touching, manly letter, written by the eldest of the three, a spirited boy, only a few weeks before his benefactor's death. It is endorsed with the name—not of the lad, but of his deceased father—and marked distinctly, though by a hand just stiffening in death, "*to be answered.*" That father was an old and dear friend. Upon his decease, in the prime of manhood, Mr. Prentiss made over in trust, for the benefit

of his three little orphans, a portion of his Vicksburg property, the annual income of which, he believed, would be amply sufficient for their education. In this he was disappointed; the property soon became involved in litigation, and was finally lost. But that did not, in his view, cancel the debt of friendship; he visited the children in their distant home, wrote to them, and sent money to defray the expenses of their schooling. Endorsed on letter after letter from their grandfather, received during those dreadful years of pecuniary famine in the Southwest, between 1839 and 1844, are the words, "acknowledging the receipt of two hundred dollars," or the words, "answered, enclosing two hundred dollars." The old man had written, in 1838, (though with no design of eliciting it from *him*), that "if he could get one or two hundred dollars for a year or two, with what he could do himself, he would be able to give the children a plain education." Mr. P. replied by enclosing the larger sum, and intimating that he would continue to do it annually. But he little dreamed what, in a couple of years, would be his own pecuniary state, or that of the times. In Mississippi, in 1841–3, two hundred dollars of good money was probably harder to raise and actually worth more than a thousand now.*

If it were proper to publish this correspondence, it would disclose delicate traits of nobleness in him to whom it was

* A single extract from a letter, written about the same time with one enclosing two hundred dollars to these orphans, furnishes the best comment upon his generosity: "There is no money in Mississippi. The prospect is more gloomy than ever, and Heaven only knows what is to be the result. To raise money by the sale of property, of whatever kind, is *utterly impracticable*. You can have no conception of the desperate condition of affairs here. I look forward to the coming summer with great apprehension as to obtaining money enough to pay ordinary expenses." Similar extracts might be given from other letters, dated near the time of the remittances.

addressed, which baffle mere description. In one of the letters he is assured that there was no need of his *apologizing* for sending United States paper, then only a shade inferior to gold. In other letters, the old man, who had a large family of his own and was hard pressed by toil and debt, reminds him somewhat bluntly of his generous promise to aid in educating the children, and then, as if conscious that *he* too might be toiling with debt, seems to struggle with the feeling that, perhaps, it was wrong to write at all.

The letters of the orphans to "dear Mr. Prentiss," are sweet, artless effusions of childhood. The following is a specimen :

———, *March* 30, 1841.

DEAR MR. PRENTISS :—

I am very glad that you are coming to see us. We want to see you very much. I hope you will come in June. Sarah is studying geography and spelling; she is learning very fast. Felix studies geography, history, and spelling. I am learning geography and history, lexicon and grammar. Felix is writing to grandma', and says his next shall be to you. He caught cold and it settled in his ears. He is head in his class. Sarah is trying to make letters on the slate, so as to write to you. She staid head in her class five weeks; she was youngest of them all. Our teacher is going away in May; she gave me a seal with my name on it; she is going to give the one with most perfect lessons, a silver pencil. I am trying to get it. I like to learn history very much. I wish when you go to N. you would try to get me some of my father's hair; I would like to have some to put in a breastpin.

Sarah and Felix send their love to you, in which they are joined by

Your affectionate friend,

ELIZA ———.

A record of his *impromptu* kindnesses to persons in distress, to old friends, or those whom he had known in better days,

would be like the tale of a Thousand and One Nights. If all the money dispensed by him in this way were brought together, it would constitute no small fortune. A single instance must suffice :

I once witnessed (writes Col. Peyton) a touching incident which revived in his memory a recollection of the early days he spent at Natchez. We were walking arm in arm along Gravier street, in New Orleans, a short time before he removed his residence from Vicksburg to that city, when a man in rags crossed the street and stopped in front, as if he would ask charity of one of us. Perceiving that he was not recognized, he said, "I see that you do not recollect me!" announcing, at the same time, his name to Mr. PRENTISS. Your brother, evidently much affected, grasped his hand with the utmost cordiality, and apologized for not knowing him. Poor fellow! his own mother would not, in all probability, have been able to do so, such was his bloated and fallen condition. I walked on to the corner, where I awaited Mr. PRENTISS, and saw him, with his pocket-book out, handing bank bills to the beggar. When he joined me, his eye moistened and his lip quivered, as he alluded to the former circumstances of this man, who was a merchant in good standing at Natchez, and had been kind and attentive to him on his arrival there, but being unfortunate in business, had become intemperate and thrown himself away.*

* "Of his kindness to the unfortunate—particularly to the widow and the orphan—you can never say enough. I have been so long accustomed to *his* generosity, that I am filled with wonder when I meet with mean or selfish conduct. How often has he come home and told me that he had given away his last dollar to some one in distress. Any poor man about here, who knew him, could tell you as to that. He was often imposed upon, but it never checked his charity. He was always ready to give, and no one in trouble ever resorted to him without being relieved and helped on his way. While he was at Vicksburg, applications were constantly made to him by persons in distress, who were passing up or down the river, to lend them money; and he has often, to my knowledge, borrowed it for the purpose, and so involved himself; for I never knew of but *one* stranger, who thus obtained from him a pecuniary loan, to repay it. I remember well the astonishment he expressed on receiving a letter with the money enclosed."—*Extract of a letter, dated Bellevue, near N. O., Feb. 18th*, 1854.

His fearless and generous heart found a natural pleasure in ministering to the sick, especially in times of raging pestilence. Cholera, yellow fever, or small-pox, had for him no terrors, and only served to develop in greater beauty his utter self-forgetfulness. How eagerly would he hasten to the bedside of a friend, smitten by one of these dreadful maladies, and watch by him day and night, taking him, meanwhile, if possible, under his own roof! How he would soothe and comfort the poor sufferer by his manly sympathies, and his hopeful, cheery words! To see *his* face in a sick room was like a sudden burst of sunshine on a dark day.*

These are, it is true, but the common charities of life, especially in the Southwest, where epidemics are a school of unselfish, humane discipline; and yet it is none the less grateful to witness them adorning the character of one we love.

His sympathy with the afflicted was such as might have been expected from a man whose sensibilities were so acute and tender. He had the heart of a child; the sight or tale of grief and misery melted him to tears, while its relief, if within his power, called forth all the characteristic energies of his soul. When his feelings of pity were deeply aroused,

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* "In Vicksburg the yellow fever has been very distressing. They never had it before, and did not well know how to treat it; so that it was much more fatal there than here. More than two hundred in that little place fell victims; among them some of the very best of the inhabitants. I cannot tell you how anxious I was for Seargent after I heard of the fever being there. Oh! the thought haunted me on the passage by night and by day, and threw such a gloom over my spirits, that I should hear of his death when I got to New Orleans. He is so reckless of himself and has such a contempt for danger, as you know, that he will not take the usual precautions. Well, he never left the city at all, although most of the inhabitants did, but went round constantly among the sick and dying, exposing himself in every way. Some of his friends were sick at his house, and one of them died there; but he escaped. Is it not wonderful? It seemed like a special interposition of Providence. His friends here, Mr. H. says, were exceedingly anxious and distressed about him—but he is safe. God be praised!"—*Extract from a Letter, dated New Orleans, Nov.* 24, 1841.

his whole frame would tremble and quiver like an aspen leaf. On one occasion a friend of his having been killed in a duel, he was designated to break the news to the bereaved wife; for a long time he walked his room in agony, and was finally compelled to declare himself unequal to the sad task. Those who received his help or kindness, felt that they were conferring rather than accepting a favor, such a cordial glow of good will and modest entreaty accompanied the gift. Indeed, all the "signs of goodness," as thus described by Lord Bacon, were found in him. "If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island, cut off from other lands, but a continent, that joins to them: if he be compassionate towards the afflictions of others, it shows that his heart is like the noble tree that is wounded itself when it gives the balm; if he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries, so that he cannot be shot; if he be thankful for small benefits, it shows that he weighs men's minds, and not their trash."*

Few things throw a finer light upon his character than the tone and contents of the letters addressed to him by strangers. Their number is truly surprising. They came, too, from all parts of the Union, and are written by persons in various conditions of life. Some of them are from young lawyers or teachers, in search of occupation: others from persons in distress, soliciting pecuniary aid or legal counsel; others from unknown admirers, expressing their regard for him, or requesting a copy of one of his speeches; others are from office-seekers, begging him to exert his political influence in their behalf. With the exception of the latter class, they are usually endorsed "answered" with the date.†

* Essay on Goodness and Goodness of Nature.

† The letters from office-seekers are almost invariably marked "Wants an Office—No Answer." After the election of Gen. Harrison, applications of this sort

Some of them are from ladies, and it is in these especially that one sees reflected the exquisite courtesy and gentleness of his nature. His refinement of feeling, indeed, was wonderful. It resembled the delicate instinct of womanhood. How many little incidents might be mentioned in illustration of this beautiful trait! But they could not be related without intruding upon the altar and inner sanctities of the domestic circle.* Of the sort of epistolary appeals made

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poured in upon him from North and South, as if he were own cousin of the President elect. They show how much was thought of his influence; but they betray great ignorance of his character. He was, probably, as little fitted to aid an office-seeker as any man in the country. He had not a particle of worldly cunning, was extremely sensitive and modest about referring to his own claims, and I have no doubt (setting aside all moral considerations), would have more willingly risked his life in a duel than importune the President for an office. Many a New York ward bully has had more potential voice in the distribution of the national spoils than he ever possessed. He was just as well calculated to dance or play a bagpipe, as to fish in the filthy waters of executive patronage. He was persuaded, once or twice, to try to "procure an appointment" for an unfortunate relative; but he made awkward work of it. "As to your applying for an office in the customs," he wrote to a relative, "if you wish it, I will certainly exert my political influence in furthering your views. But my advice is decidedly against it. A subordinate office is a poor and precarious mode of livelihood. If you can possibly surmount your present difficulties, do not think of office. You would not like it. You are too proud and sensitive, and your independence would suffer inevitably. However, I speak entirely on your account. If your judgment points out that course, I will cheerfully aid you with my political friends." Writing later to the same relative, he says: "I regret much to hear that fortune still frowns upon you; but the longest storms must clear up at last. You know that you can command me to the extent of my power and ability. I feel no delicacy whatever in soliciting for you the office you desire. I have never asked my political friends for anything for myself; and knowing your qualifications, I do not see the slightest impropriety in urging your appointment." A little later he wrote again: "I received your letter this morning, and hasten to reply. I am both mortified and disgusted at the result of your application. Upon reflection, however, I cannot wonder at it. That an office should be given to a man simply because he is fitted for it and capable of fulfilling its duties, is a circumstance of such rare occurrence, that you must not think it strange that you have not increased the number. I would to Heaven it were in my power to aid you! I have suffered much myself but not as you have done."

* An extract from a letter of a young friend, who had determined to change the law for the study of divinity, will give an inkling of the characteristic referred to. The letter is dated January 3, 1838: "Your brother's kindness to me in his con-

to him by persons in distress, the following is a sample. It is an extract from a letter, written by a lady in 1839 :

"Although unknown to you, I have presumed to trespass a few moments on your valuable time and your patience. Be assured, sir, that the high regard I have for your professional capacity, united to that nobleness of soul and kindliness of nature, which, I am told, you possess in an eminent degree, has alone encouraged me to do so. Mr. Prentiss, you have a *mother!* I, too, am a mother; and to you, I am convinced, that hallowed name will never cease to have a charm. Mine has been a checkered life. Misfortune has pursued me with unparalleled perseverance. And now I implore your opinion and advice on a subject, which involves my future destiny." She then goes on to tell him the long history of her troubles. The professional services gratuitously rendered by him in response to such appeals, were far more valuable than gold.

Another class of letters are in acknowledgement of some kindness. The following extract from one addressed to him, shortly before his death, by a lady of New Orleans may serve as a specimen :

While the events of the past week are still fresh in my memory, and ere another closes, permit me, my dear sir, to render to you the tribute of a grateful heart. You have been the instrument in the hand of God, of effecting that which none other could have done. While alone and separated from my dear husband, you have generously come forward to my aid, and by so doing have caused the heart of both parents and

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versation and his acts, just before his departure for Washington, I shall never forget. It seems strange to me that such a man is not a Christian. He entered so warmly into my views, and seemed so to anticipate my wishes, that I know I am not saying too much, when I say he is the most noble and generous being I ever knew. But I am afraid to give utterance, even to you, to the opinion, which, form his uniform kindness towards me, I entertain of him. I owe to him every thing I have."

children to rejoice. Words, however, I find inadequate to express the emotions of my heart.

* * * * *

Praying that Heaven's choicest blessings may ever rest upon yourself and dear family, I subscribe myself your grateful friend.

His unselfish, considerate temper, his hospitality, his extreme fondness for children, and his ardent affections alike fitted him to enjoy domestic life, and to be, what he ever was, its sun and centre.* Page after page might be filled with anecdotes illustrative of his devotion to his mother, wife, children, and other near relatives. His feeling towards them, and the way he sometimes expressed it, would have seemed quite extravagant to one who did not know the perfect sincerity of his nature. But on this point his letters render it needless to say more.†

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* "I miss so much his kind smile and affectionate greeting. He never went to his office without kissing us, when he left and when he returned. We always followed him to the door, and looked up the street after him, as far as we could see, and when his little carriage brought him home, we all went down to meet him, and receive again his fond kiss and words of love."—*Extract of a Letter, dated August* 31, 1850.

† A remarkably characteristic anecdote, not only illustrative of his filial affection but also of his ready perception of the fitting thing to be said, is given as follows: When on a visit, some years ago, to the North, but after his reputation had become wide-spread, a distinguished lady of Portland took pains to obtain an introduction, by visiting the steamboat in which she learned he was to take his departure in a few moments. "I have wished to see you," said she to Mr. Prentiss, "for my heart has often congratulated the mother who has such a son." "Rather congratulate *the son* on having such a mother!" was the instant reply; and it was unaffected and heartfelt.

No man, perhaps, ever lived who received a greater number of personal compliments than Mr. Prentiss, but he always received them with that peculiar grace and dignity so eminent in his reply to the lady of Portland. One day, in New Orleans, I met him in the street, leading by the hand his two sons. I was struck with their evident resemblance to their father, and complimented him upon it. "Ah," said he, with the fondest look of affection, "they have the light hair and blue eye of the Anglo-Saxon robber; they are American boys."—*Mr. Thorpe's Reminiscences.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Letters—Severe Illness—Visits the North with his Family—Reminiscences of this Visit—Fishing Excursions and Rides about Newburyport—His Interest in the Hungarian Struggle—Trips to Boston, New Bedford, and Martha's Vineyard—His Regard for Old Men—His Conversational Talent—Returns South—Letters—Rapid Failure of his Health—A Reminiscence by Col. Cobb—Devotion to his Professional Labors—Is invited to address the Story Law Association—Letters—Approach of the Final Struggle—His last Appearance in Court—Letters to his Wife—Sudden Attack—Is removed to Natchez—The Closing Scene.

ÆT. 40–41. 1849–50.

LET us now return to the narrative. In December, 1848, the cholera broke out in New Orleans. In the course of the winter Mr. Prentiss had an attack, closely resembling that terrible disease, which brought him to the verge of death. He had not yet recovered from the prostrating effects of his political exertions during the previous summer and autumn; indeed, he never recovered from them. The weather, too, as appears from the following letters, was enough of itself to engender pestilence.

TO HIS YOUNGEST BROTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *Jan.* 15, 1849.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

We have at length passed safely through the terrible epidemic which has filled this city, during the last month, with so much alarm and gloom. The disease has been bad enough in reality, but imagination has clothed it with a thousand unreal horrors.

I never witnessed a greater panic. In three or four days after it broke out, not less than 15,000 people fled from the city, and those that remained were little less frightened than those who ran away. It was soon apparent, however, that the mortality was principally confined to the exposed and the intemperate among the poorer classes; especially to the poor emigrants, who, arriving in large numbers, were huddled together upon the levee, without clothing or shelter. The weather for several weeks was worse than I ever before saw, and tended greatly to aggravate the disease. Few persons have died among those who were in comfortable condition and prudent in their diet. I do not miss more than two or three of my own acquaintances. One of our little servants was taken ill at the beginning of the disease, but recovered readily. We have all been sufferers from bad colds; otherwise my family has been remarkably well. To-day Jeanie has commenced going to school; she seems perfectly delighted with the idea, and I think she will learn rapidly. The baby grows finely, and is the best child we have had. I never hear her cry. She is full of vivacity and good temper. We expect Mrs. Williams down in a few days, to spend a month or two with us.

There is much gossip as to Gen. Taylor's Cabinet; but I do not believe he has yet made up his mind definitively. Crittenden has been offered a place, but has not yet decided to accept.

My love to L. and the dear little children, in which Mary and our little brood join heartily.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *June* 7, 1849.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

You have already heard through Mary, of the severe illness under which I labored several weeks since. By the blessing of a kind Providence, I have entirely recovered from

the malady, though still very weak from its effects. It was not the cholera I had, but an inflammation of the breast and bowels, caused by long continued colds, aggravated by over-exertion. Now that is over, I do not regret my sickness; on the contrary, I think it was of great service to me. My appetite, which had for two or three years dwindled to almost nothing, has revived, and so soon as I pick up my strength, I shall feel like a new man. I was sick, that is, confined to my bed, about two weeks. When I got well enough to move I went up to Natchez, where I had some business, and where I stayed two weeks. About ten days ago I sent Mary and the children up to Longwood. Geordie had been quite ill, and Mary was worn out, and though they did not like to go without me, I insisted upon it. I have had several letters from them, and they are now all doing nicely. This city is in a very disagreeable condition; one-half of it overflowed, the weather hot and sultry, and the stench intolerable. I fear it will be exceedingly sickly this summer. I shall get through my business in a week or ten days, when I shall go up to Natchez, spend a couple of weeks with my family, and then come on North and enjoy the happiness of again seeing you, my dear mother, as well as the rest of our loved ones. My pleasure, however, will be much diminished, I fear, by not being able to show you my dear wife and children. It is not absolutely certain, but I think there is little probability of their accompanying me. I supposed at one time I had made such arrangements as would enable me to take them; but I have been disappointed, and at present see no prospect except to leave them, during my absence, at Longwood. I know this will be a great disappointment to you all, but it cannot be greater than ours. I think I shall go by sea, provided a good steamer leaves here any time between the 1st and 10th of July. The doctor advises me to do so, and says the sea air will brace me up and restore my strength. I got A.'s letter to Mary yesterday, and took the liberty of reading it before I sent it on to her. And now, my dearest mother, I must bid you good-bye, for I feel rather weak from writing this scrawl, which I fear you will hardly be able to read. I trust it will not be many days before I shall ask your blessing, which I

value more than any worldly thing. Give my best love to dear Anna, Mr. Stearns, and the little ones, and believe me always

Your affectionate and devoted son,

S. S. Prentiss.

He writes under the same date to his youngest brother:

We have had a miserable winter in New Orleans, and the city is still in a horrible condition; one-half of it is inundated, and the whole of it is reeking with villainous odors, swarming with mosquitoes, and filled with cholera. I apprehend a terrible pestilence upon the subsiding of the waters. As yet they have not receded. Great distress has ensued from this new calamity. Most of the submerged districts are inhabited by the poorer people, and no pecuniary calculations can reach the amount of suffering which has been and still is being experienced. The whole scene is sickening to both the physical and mental eyes. I shall get away from it in ten days, I think.

I got a letter from S. the other day. It was dated at St. Joseph's, Mo. He writes in good health and spirits, and I trust may be more fortunate in the gold diggins than he has been in the leaden ones. The accounts from California are truly wonderful, and who knows but our good brother may yet make a fortune; perhaps find a diamond big as a hen's egg, or at least as large as an ostrich's. He has had some of the experience of "Sinbad the Sailor;" perhaps he may have some of his luck.

I shall keep you moving when I come on, for I expect it will be rather a flying visit. See that the trout are prepared for my hook. Much love to all of you.

He writes again from Longwood, June 27:

Well, my dear brother, what do you think, Mary is coming on with me after all. Geordie has been sick, and still remains in bad health, and the doctor thinks, as do we all, that a trip North will accomplish for him more than medicine. So when I came up here the other day, I found it all arranged that Mary should

take Jeanie, Geordie, and the baby, and accompany me, leaving Seargy here with his grandmamma. Of course, the plan was agreeable to me, and as I found, in winding up my business for the summer, that my means would turn out somewhat better than I expected, I at once assented. We shall leave New Orleans either in the steamer Falcon, which sails on the 14th prox., or in the Crescent City, which starts three or four days afterwards. I have written to New Orleans on the subject, and as soon as I determine, will let you know. We are all well except Geordie and myself, and our health is improving.

He reached Newburyport early in August. The pleasant memory of this his last pilgrimage North will never be effaced, though it was sadly clouded by the state of his health, and by the general gloom which pervaded the country, in consequence of the ravages of cholera.

A large portion of the family circle were assembled at Newburyport, awaiting his arrival. Never shall I forget the first glimpse of him as, holding one of his children by the hand, he eagerly pressed his way from the cars. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* A score of years seemed, of a sudden, to have passed over his head; his hair had become thick set with grey, while every feature of that noble countenance was stamped with deep, unwonted lines of care, sorrow, and disease. It needed no interpreter to explain that these were the harbingers of Death!

And yet, when he found himself once more near his mother's hearth, it seemed to revive him like the breath of spring; the old smile, the old gaiety and playful humor, the old swelling tide of life, ever and anon, came back, and he would appear as aforetime. On the day after his arrival, he went to Boston and purchased presents for the children. He returned in the evening, highly delighted; and when, calling the whole flock around him, he seated himself in the midst of them, and distributed his generous gifts, no

prince on coronation day could look happier or more like a king. One would never have dreamed that he was sick.

For several days and nights he haunted the Merrimac in quest of blue-fish, which had made their appearance there, it was said, for the first time in seventy years; but the winds were contrary and he caught nothing. We took some delightful drives, also, up and down the banks of that beautiful river. How well I remember one of them! It was a charming summer afternoon; nature smiled with unwonted loveliness; while the sight of the smooth flowing stream, along the edges of which we rode, the quiet New England landscape, dotted with sweet homes of virtuous industry, thickening, here and there, into a neat village, with its school house, its churches, and its varied insignia of honest thrift, the singing of birds, and that indescribable rural stillness, which sometimes marks the approach of autumn—all served to soothe him into the most gentle and communicative mood. Indeed, it was a scene to make one forget, for the moment, that there is aught of evil in the world. How mildly he spoke of his old political foes in Mississippi, having even a kind word for some of the Repudiating editors; men, as I supposed, quite beyond the pale of his charity. How touchingly he alluded to certain trials and disappointments he had passed through, and yet without uttering a syllable of reproach against those who were chiefly responsible for them. His worst enemy could not have listened to this conversation without confessing that he harbored neither malice nor revenge in his bosom. Among other things, he related, with the most tender and gratified emotion, the following incident. An old Mississippi friend, between whom and himself a total estrangement had sprung up in consequence of political differences, was visited with severe misfortunes, ending in temporary derangement of mind. Not long before he left New Orleans, this gentleman, who chanced to be in the

city, met him one day as he was stepping aboard a steamboat, and rushing towards him, eagerly grasped his hand, exclaiming, as the tears trickled down his cheeks: "For Heaven's sake, Prentiss, let's you and I be friends again! I always liked you, and cannot bear this alienation. Let us be friends again!"*

Another day was spent in a family excursion to Hampton Beach. Before starting, he insisted on getting a special supply of fishing-tackle and overcoats. With his usual prodigality, he purchased enough to last a year or two. The ride, and the sight of the ocean, seemed to refresh his whole being. But he was sadly depressed, on reaching the hotel, by learning that a steamer had just arrived, bringing news of the surrender of Görgey. When he caught the tenor of the intelligence, his countenance fell, as if his own country had lost an army. He watched with profound interest the progress of the great Hungarian struggle; and shortly after his return South, in the last popular address ever made by him, paid a gorgeous tribute to the heroism of the Magyar patriots. No question of European politics, probably, ever so wrought upon his imagination. It seemed associated in his mind with all the romance of Eastern history, while it appealed to his judgment as a contest for constitutional freedom.

Another day was spent in Boston, where he had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Webster, from whom he received a cordial invitation to visit Marshfield. He was especially delighted with a drive out through several of the ancient and highly cultivated towns which form the suburbs of Boston, expressing a sort of forlorn hope that he might one day be able to come and live there himself. The sight

* One of the most touching tributes to Mr. P., after his death, was from an insane person. It appeared in a Northern paper, and was written, I have some reason to think, by the individual referred to above.

of so much rural scenery, adorned by all the appliances of art, wealth, and elegant taste, seemed to bring back the memory of early days, and revive, for a moment, the wish to grow old and to die in New England.

From Boston he went to take once more by the hand his revered friend Mr. Clay, then sojourning at Newport. Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster were both, at this time, in feeble health, and he evidently expected long to survive them. Little did he dream that those illustrious statesmen were yet to perform what a large portion of their countrymen regarded as their greatest works of patriotic wisdom and self-devotion!

Another excursion, which he enjoyed very much, was to Martha's Vineyard, in pursuit of blue-fish. On the way, he tarried a day or two at New Bedford, and was quite astonished to observe the princely residences, and other monuments of wealth and commercial prosperity, which that beautiful city has built for itself out of the spoil of distant oceans. In his Pilgrim address, he had drawn a vivid picture of the hardy whalemen of New England. "Bold and restless as the old Northern Vikings, they go forth to seek their fortunes in the mighty deep. The ocean is their pasture, and over its wide prairies they follow the monstrous herds that feed upon its azure fields. As the hunter casts his lasso upon the wild horse, so they throw their lines upon the tumbling whale. They 'draw out Leviathan with a hook.' They 'fill his skin with barbed irons,' and in spite of his terrible strength, they 'part him among the merchants.' To them there are no pillars of Hercules." He had now an opportunity of witnessing, for the first time, the implements and fruits of this adventurous seamanship. On the morning after his arrival, a chowder excursion to a neighboring island-rock was arranged by Capt. Robert Gibbs, and under the conduct of that true-hearted man, we soon found our-

selves in the offing, when lo! bearing down upon us, a stately whale-ship,

> ——"bound for the isles
> Of Javan or Gadire,
> With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
> Sails filled, and streamers waving."

Fortunately, she chanced at that moment to "heave to" for a farewell visit from her owner, who kindly invited us aboard. It would take a long time to describe the warlike appearance and immense outfit of one of these Titans of the deep. Her captain was a young man, just married, as we understood; and four years might elapse ere his return. It was not strange, therefore, that his manly countenance was somewhat clouded. New Bedford and Nantucket are full of melancholy tales of whaleships coming in, after a weary voyage round the world, with flag half-mast, to announce to the young wife that her long-expected lord, unknowing, perhaps, that he was a father, sleeps in an ocean grave. Or, while still far from the shore, the youthful captain, eagerly questioning the pilot for news from home —the first, perhaps, that has greeted him since his departure—is smitten with the dreadful response: "Your wife and child are both dead!"* But such painful images soon vanished, as her canvas tightening before a stiff breeze, the gallant vessel resumed her course, and was quickly lost beneath the distant horizon. This little episode imparted new zest to our fishing and chowder, and when the sea excursion was completed by a rural walk through the gar-

* The pastoral experience of our whaling ports, during the last half century, would afford materials for a book, more interesting and pathetic than any tale of fiction.

den of Mr. Arnold—one of the finest in all New England—he had passed a day of such pleasurable and salutary excitement, that it seemed as if a few score more like it would quite restore him to health again.

His trip to Martha's Vineyard though more stirring, was rather an injury than a benefit; for the blue-fish, which had proved so shy in the Merrimac, were here only too willing to bite, and he would not rest until he had caught several score and "beaten Black Daniel" (Mr. Webster), who had been there just before him.

He was greatly disappointed in not being able to attend the annual commencement at Bowdoin. He had made his arrangements to be present, but a temporary lameness compelled him to keep his room. He spoke with warm affection of his *Alma Mater*, and said the sombre aspect of the old pines, which surround it, and the sighing of the wind through their branches, had made an indelible impression upon him while at college. He used to saunter through them, or lie down under their summer shade, and project fancy sketches of the future. His reminiscences of the lecture-room of Professor Cleaveland were particularly vivid, and he delighted to expatiate upon the genial gifts and acquirements of that veteran in Natural Science.

While at Newburyport, he was gratified with making the acquaintance of the venerable Daniel Dana, D.D., a gentleman of the old school, and versed beyond most of the profession in public affairs. He seldom appeared more in his element than when discoursing with men of this class; his rare conversational gifts shone, at such times, with unusual grace; and there was always in his manner towards old men a deference and refined courtesy, which never failed to attract and charm them. In his wildest days, and when encircled by boisterous companions, the presence of a cler-

gyman, whether young or old, commanded instant respect.* He had, as has been said, an innate delicacy and considerateness of feeling, which seemed to belong rather to the gentle nature of woman than to that of a man exposed to the brazen influences of the world. On his way North, in 1840, a venerable and celebrated divine—the President of one of our principal colleges—became acquainted with him, and was so captivated by his manners and conversation, that, after they had travelled awhile together, one might easily have mistaken them for father and son.

His conversational powers were, indeed, quite as remarkable as his more public gifts. To his friends, his familiar talk was a perennial spring of genial and ever-varying delight. He had an inexhaustible fund of amusing or instructive anecdote, partly the spoil of much reading, but still more of it the ripe fruit of his own experience and observation of life. His manner of telling a story was very fine ; there was such drollery and fun and gay humor in his look, tone, and gesture, that, even without novelty in the matter, or point in the language, he would have been a most entertaining story-teller ; but with the addition of originality and a diction wrought in the very phrase and spirit of the comic muse, he was inimitable. "Let any one," writes the late Judge Bullard, "let any one, who should

* In the summer of 1838, he made an excursion from Washington in company with several members of Congress and other friends. It was a sweltering day, and as the party took their seats together in the cars they all, one after another, poured forth a thoughtless and profane malediction upon the weather. A plain Baptist clergyman, who was sitting near, at once expostulated with them on the impropriety of using such language. One of the group, Gen. ——, was highly offended at the reproof, and told him to "hush up." Mr. PRENTISS, however, instantly came to the rescue. He said, the rebuke was well-deserved ; that the clergyman had only done his duty ; and that they were all wrong, wholly wrong. He then proceeded, in most eloquent strain, to expatiate upon the manner in which his mother had trained him to treat sacred things. I received this account, not long since, from one of the offending party.

have witnessed, for the first and only time, the representation of a comedy, the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, sit down and endeavor to give an account of it, from memory, in writing to a friend; he will find it impossible to convey any adequate idea of the infinite drollery, of the playful humor, of the sudden outbreaks of eloquence, which charmed him at the time, but left only a general impression upon the mind. Occasional anecdotes and repartees he might, indeed, recollect quite vividly; but then the peculiar manner and turn of expression, the very aroma of wit, has evaporated, and cannot be restored. Many and many an evening have I passed in the society of your lamented brother for a series of years, which appeared afterwards, and even yet, a delightful dream, but it would be an utterly hopeless attempt to give any readable account of them."

His conversation was as much characterized by solid judgment and original thought, as by wit and humor. Whatever the topic of discourse, whether literature, politics, law, science, or philosophy, he was ever ready, and his observations were always acute, striking, and marked by a vein of keen, practical sense. His mind was naturally reflective and inquisitive, while, at the same time, singularly clear and accurate in its perceptions. He never talked vaguely or at random; his words always had a plain and definite meaning. His very jokes he "cracked" with intelligence; and in this respect there was a perfect resemblance between his conversation and his oratory; a fine, genial method pervading both. His intellect was so potential, and, at the same time, so full of logical force, that while it was continually blossoming forth in a thousand new forms of wit and fantasy, he never counterfeited truth and nature.

Reference has already been made to his fondness for books of fiction. There was, probably, not a prominent scene, or

character, in all the works of Fielding, Scott, Cooper, Irving, Bulwer, Dickens, and Thackeray, with which he was not so familiar that he could at once describe or reproduce it in conversation. His reading, too, embraced a great deal of periodical literature. One of his special favorites in this line was *Blackwood's Magazine*, which he preferred to all others. But he did not fail to acquaint himself with the graver issues of the press. One of his last literary intentions was to read Dante and Plato, that he might judge for himself whether their works were worthy of their exalted fame. He expressed much delight with some things he had recently met in the writings of those two models of noble scholarship and Christian manhood—Dr. Arnold and Julius Hare. He cherished a hearty affection for Old England, loved to speak of her as the Mother Country, and though not insensible to her faults, was fully aware of the vast debt we owe to her for no small portion of what is good or stable in our social system, our law and our political institutions. This feeling was, doubtless, increased by his observing how the demagogues, and certain repudiators fresh from Erin, instinctively abused the land of Shakspeare, Milton, and the Pilgrim Fathers.

Many other points might be dwelt upon; such as a long discussion on the old distinction between reason and the understanding; an account of the great Poultney claim, for the trial of which he had just prepared an elaborate brief; a ride along the banks of the Merrimac, during which he spoke with warm, grateful interest of the young men of the Republic, and the regard they had shown for him, adding, modestly, that some things in his career might perhaps encourage those of them who were poor; another ride to the sea in quest of quails and sand-birds, during which he gave some highly interesting incidents of Mr. Clay's oratory, and answered many questions about his own, expressing at

the end his utter dread of "going into the hands of the reporters;" our long after-dinner talks under the garden-trees;—but it is time to draw these reminiscences to a close.

How vividly, as if it were yesterday, I recall the last time I ever saw him! It was on a fine autumnal morning, as he was leaving Newburyport for Washington City, whither he was called on professional business. The plan was, that he should rejoin his wife and children at New Bedford, and pass a couple of weeks there with as many of the family as could, in the meanwhile, be assembled. He was in excellent spirits and exceedingly gentle; as he stood for some time conversing with the Rev. Dr. Dana, who also awaited the cars, his countenance beamed with that peculiar radiance, which marked it in earlier days; at length, the signal whistle was heard, and saying, with his sweet smile, "I shall see you in New Bedford—take good care of my hen and chickens!" he bade me farewell, and gave me the last earthly grasp of that bountiful hand!

He found it would be necessary to give up the visit to New Bedford, and go home in the steamer Ohio, on the 20th September, or else return by the southern land route, which was wholly beyond his strength. The dangerous illness of my little boy prevented me from meeting him in New York; but his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. Stearns, joined him there, and had the satisfaction of a parting token, as the noble steamer bore him away to his South-western home.

He thus announced his safe arrival:

New Orleans, *October* 2, 1849.

My Dear Brother:—

We arrived here safe and sound the day before yesterday, at five o'clock, P. M. I telegraphed William, request-

ing him to inform you and mother, so that I presume you are, by this time, aware of our safety and welfare. We had a terrible time for the first two days: the sea "wrought" exceedingly. There was a severe gale and our vessel rolled among the waves like a child's plaything. Every one on board was sick. I suffered much more than Mary or the children. For three days I vomited continually, and suffered more than ever I did before in my life. To add to the terrors of the storm, about three o'clock in the morning of the first night, I was awakened by the startling cry of *fire*, mingled with the shrieks of many of the passengers, who burst from their staterooms in the most inconceivable alarm. The fire, which originated from a broken lamp, was soon quelled; and after the storm had subsided, we had a quiet, and, excepting that it was very hot, a pleasant voyage. The vessel moved along as smoothly as if it were in the river. There was a beautiful moon, and we frequently sat up on deck till midnight.

I find the city perfectly healthy. It is true, there are some cases of yellow fever in the hospitals, but none have occurred as yet in private practice, and it is now too late to allow any serious apprehension of an epidemic. We found our house had just been painted, and everything was, of course, topsy-turvy. Mary is busy putting things in order, but it will take several days to make it look like home. We shall not go up to Natchez, but have written for Mrs. Williams to come down, and bring dear little Seargy. We are longing to see him. I need not say how much I regret the sudden and almost rude manner in which we terminated our visit. I had anticipated much pleasure in sojourning with you at New Bedford a couple of weeks, and do not doubt we should have had a very delightful visit. It went very hard with me to give it up. I especially grieve that I left without seeing our dear mother again. I am convinced, however, that I acted wisely in following your suggestion and coming on the Ohio. My business affairs required my attention, and the climate here is also, at this season, more genial for me than that of the North. I have no doubt my health will now be rapidly restored. I believe the journey has been of

great service to me, and also to Mary and the children. The latter especially are as fat and hearty as so many little pigs. I comfort myself with the idea that after mother and A. have removed to Newark, I shall pay them a flying visit every year or two; and I also live in hope that we shall yet have mother to spend a winter with us in New Orleans.

I trust that a kind Providence has restored your dear little boy to health, and that you are now free from all affliction. I am looking anxiously for letters from you all. Mary joins me in love to L., yourself, and the children.

Your affectionate brother,

SEARGENT.

TO HIS MOTHER.

NEW ORLEANS, *Oct.* 31, 1849.

MY DEAR MOTHER:—

I have delayed writing longer than I intended, owing to various causes beyond my control. We have all been suffering much from cold since our return, first one, and then another. At present Seargy and I are the afflicted ones. The weather is delightful, and there is every prospect of a pleasant winter. It was a sore disappointment to me, to leave without seeing you again; but, on the whole, it was fortunate we came out at the time we did. Mrs. Williams has paid us a nice visit; she brought Seargy down with her. I would give anything if you could see him. He is entirely different from all the rest, both in appearance and disposition. He is more quiet and sensitive than either of the other children. Little Una walks perfectly well now, and is running about all the time. All of them remember you, and talk a great deal about you. I have still the strongest hope and belief that you will soon come and spend a winter with us. How I wish you were here now! I never saw more beautiful weather. It is cool, without frost, and the sun has been shining brightly for more than a week.

I suppose Anna is now safely settled in her new home. The more I think of it, the more I am pleased with the change. It is better in all respects for her and Mr. S., her children, and

for you. When you move there, as you will, of course, in the spring, you will find it a much pleasanter place than Newburyport. The climate is milder and better fitted for your health. Perhaps, I may take a rapid trip North myself, and assist in your removal. However, there will be plenty of time to settle that; and, in the meantime, you must make yourself as comfortable as possible. You will feel very lonesome, of course, in A.'s absence, but then it will be only for a short time. Good Elinor K. will, I trust, be with you, and will prove a great comfort. Mary and I will write you often, so I hope you will not be dispirited at the prospect of the winter. I start on Monday to attend courts in the country, and shall be gone three or four weeks. Mary and the children join me in much love to you, and kind remembrance to Miss Elinor.

Your affectionate and devoted son,

SEARGENT.

On the 10th of Dec., he wrote :

I returned a week ago from a month's trip into the northwestern part of the State, and was so worn out that I have not been able to do anything before to-day. I went to the parish of Morehouse to attend the trial of an important will case. The weather was very inclement and the roads horrible, some thirty or forty miles being through the worst swamp I ever saw in my life. I suffered a great deal from cold and wet, and have had, in consequence, a slight return of my old malady. have been improving slowly since I got home; but it will take a week or two before I can expect to recover my strength entirely. On the whole, however, my general health is better than when I returned from the North. Mary wrote you, I believe, that I had had an operation performed on my throat, which resulted most beneficially; it has nearly cured me of my gagging fits in the morning.

You see the Whigs have been defeated in this State. It was no more than I expected; they can never bear success. Immediately after victory they disband, and throw away their

arms. Of course, the next contest finds them wholly unprepared. Poor old Zack will have a hard time of it this winter, I fear. He will find demagogues and politicians much more difficult to manage than Mexicans.

On Forefather's Day, although extremely feeble, he made a special effort to be present at the New England Dinner, for the purpose of declaring his sentiments upon the troubled state of the country. He offered a toast expressive of a fervent wish, that the time might never come when a citizen of New Orleans should find himself a stranger in Boston, or a citizen of Boston be a foreigner in New Orleans. He then proceeded, in a most impressive speech, to point out, candidly and plainly, the faults on *both sides*, North and South, set forth the incalculable woes that would follow disunion, and concluded with the remark, that if such a calamity was coming, he could only cast in his lot with the land of his wife and children. At the Dinner, a year before, he had pronounced a glowing and heartfelt eulogy upon the Pilgrim *mothers*.

On the 25th of December, he wrote to his mother :

I wish you, my dearest mother, a happy and merry Christmas. Would you were here to enjoy it with Mary, the children, and myself! It is one of the loveliest days I ever saw; just cool enough to be comfortable, and the sun as bright as if it had never been covered by a cloud. Indeed we have had several days of the most beautiful weather you can imagine. Mary has been up to her elbows, for the last week, making boned turkeys, mince-pies, and other goodies, while the children, under pretence of helping Mamma, manage to get their fingers wherever there are any plums or spices. The dear little things are in excellent health, and enjoy themselves beyond measure. Una is the gayest of them all; she is singing and hopping about all day like a bird. Oh! how delighted we should all be if you were away from cold Newburyport, and enjoying this sunny

day with us! * * * My health is gradually but firmly improving. Mary and the children are all well, and join in much love to you and our good friend Miss Elinor. God bless you, my dear mother.

Early in 1850 his health became so feeble that he could with difficulty eat or sleep; yet, he scarcely ever worked so hard. A single case before the Recorder occupied nearly three weeks, exposing him to the worst kind of New Orleans winter weather, when he should have rather kept his bed. His disease became more and more obstinate, and oftentimes, after toiling all day at his office, or in court, he would pass a large part of the night in painful attacks, followed by severe fainting turns. He was a perfect novice in sickness, and, as is apt to be the case with men of robust constitution and strong will, he found it hard to follow the rules of prudence, or to subject himself to medical prescription. A terrible restlessness and nervous irritability also seized upon him—sure precursors of what was coming! One human being alone could tell his sufferings, mental and physical, during this sad winter. His own graphic picture of the poor Irishman besieged by famine, is scarcely an exaggerated description of the manner in which his relentless foe conquered him. He made heroic and desperate resistance; but it was a case past cure, as many of his friends too plainly saw. Indeed he, at times, felt it himself. The following touching reminiscence by Col. Joseph B. Cobb, shows this:

A few months anterior to his death, he chanced to visit Mobile, hoping that the fresh sea air might recruit him sufficiently to enter with wonted zeal upon the argument of an important law-case, then pending in some court at New Orleans. I arrived in Mobile the day he had appointed to leave. Not finding him at his hotel, I was directed to go down to the New

Orleans packet, as he had already embarked for return with her to his home. There I found him, but sadly, sadly altered. I saw at a glance that the Death-angel had already marked him for early prey. The hollow, sunken eye, and the peaked nose, and sallow cheek, indicated too plainly that disease had baffled skill and science, and that the sands of life were fast running out. I was too much touched not to show my feelings. He fixed his eye steadily on me, and asked if his appearance did not shock me, and if I did not think "that he was nearly ready for the shroud and the coffin." Finding, somewhat to my surprise, I confess, that he was entirely calm and resigned to any event, I could not reconcile myself to act uncandidly with him at so serious a time; and I, therefore, said to him that his looks fully confirmed the fears I had entertained for his health from the many rumors that had reached me, and that I regretted to say that necessity seemed to require of him to set his house in order for the last earthly trial. His reply was, that he thought his chances for recovery quite hopeless, and that his mind was made up to await the event.

We then left the lower saloon, and found seats upon the upper deck. While there conversing, a little, sickly-looking fruit-girl came up to us, offering to sell her apples and oranges. The offer was so common that I turned off, and continued our conversation, without paying the least attention to the little cateress. Your brother's features, however, lighted up into a most benignant smile and expression; and although he could not venture to eat her fruit, he bought the worth of several dimes, only to give them to the passing servants of the boat. His heart could never resist an appeal, and this little incident seems to have been the offspring of some suddenly-aroused sympathy, induced, most probably, by the wan appearance and sickly complexion of the poor young girl.

At this time Mr. Prentiss had, in the pocket of his surtout, an idle production of mine; and, after most kindly complimenting its poor merits (which I felt was rather the result of partiality for the author, than the unbiased judgment of an accomplished critic, as he was), he proceeded to say, in a tone

of striking sadness, that he always had cherished a taste for literature, and that he only regretted the waste of so many bright hours of his life, which might have been devoted to the more close cultivation of this taste. I replied that there were few literary men who would not willingly give up their hopes of fame for that which already clustered around his name. He answered, with a melancholy smile, that the world's applause had always astonished him; that whilst he was not conscious of ever having neglected the business of client or constituent, he had really been *an idle man;* that he felt he had not improved his time as he might and should have done. This very humble estimation of his career was not shared by me, and I wondered that a man who had filled his country with his fame as an orator should entertain so lowly an opinion of his own merits.

This was the last time that I ever met with your brother. He partially promised to join me in New York or at Niagara Falls during the summer following; but the rapid incursions of his ruthless disease, the fond attachments of home and family, and, I suppose, the multiplication of business, prevented the fulfillment of his projects. He afterwards, as I learned, gave me the last proof of quite a long friendship by writing, for one of the New Orleans papers, a very flattering notice of the idle work already alluded to.

In spite, however, of his own misgivings and of the warning of friends, he continued his labors with unabated diligence, and fancied that every little lull in his malady was an omen of returning health. It is wonderful how this sort of delusion will seize upon minds of the clearest judgment, and reduce them to a state of almost infantile credulity respecting the plainest symptoms of approaching death. In the case of Mr. Prentiss it was, no doubt, owing in part to the consciousness of unbroken mental power, and also to that marvellous faculty of hope by which he was distinguished. Early in February he writes: "My health is improving, and I doubt not will be entirely restored, so soon as the

spring weather commences." On the 9th of March he writes to his mother: "My health is tolerable, but I do not doubt will improve rapidly as the warm weather advances. I have taken a beautiful cottage on the sea-shore for the summer. It is at Pass Christian. There is a fine fruit-orchard and garden attached, and a splendid grapery. Mary's health is not very good, and I am anxious she should get away as soon as possible. She and the children will move over about the middle of May, and not return till November. I shall not be able to go till the latter part of June. It will be a delightful place for them, and I anticipate much pleasure in escaping from the city and breathing the pure sea-breeze."

On the 29th of March he writes again to his youngest brother:

I am several letters in arrears to you; but, in reality, I have, for the last six or eight weeks, been so under the weather from ill health and hard work, that I could not bring myself to put pen to paper. * * * I have had plenty of professional business this winter, but most of it is of slow growth, being of a litigated character, and calculated to last several years.

We are all pretty well, though the children are complaining a good deal of colds, and Mary is troubled with an inflammation of the throat. Our weather has been horrid during the last few days—cold, raining, and occasionally freezing. I am delighted to hear that the health of your own family is so much improved. I long to hear of my dear mother's safe removal and pleasant settlement at Newark. I think it almost certain that I shall make a hasty trip to New York in July or August. I have some professional business which will probably require my attention a few days at Washington City, and if I go there it will be *via* Newark. I shall probably take one of the fine steamers from here to New York, but cannot now designate the time.

I need not say how delighted we all were to get tidings of S. It did me good to hear he was in such fine health and spirits, and that the thirst for gold had not destroyed his humanity. S. was always kind and benevolent, and I have strong expectations now that success will crown his laborious career. I had begun to feel strong misgivings as to his safety; but safely arrived in California, in good health, I see nothing in the way of a prosperous result.

I have neither strength nor spirits at present to say anything about politics, except that I think we shall pass safely through the crisis. Webster's speech is a noble one, worthy of an American Senator; but more another time.

The news of Mr. Calhoun's death arriving about this time, Mr. Prentiss pronounced a warm-hearted eulogy upon his character. He was utterly opposed to some of the great South Carolinian's political doctrines, especially that of Nullification; but he took delight in rendering honor to his many noble qualities and the simple grandeur of his intellect.

The latter part of April he was gratified by a highly flattering invitation from the "Story Law Association," of Harvard University, to deliver their first Annual Address. "I can never forget," says Judge McCaleb, of the United States District Court, "the feelings of gratified pride he expressed on the reception of that invitation, or the emotions of regret he betrayed at being compelled, by his feeble health, to decline it. Had his physical strength been adequate to the task, Petrarch, in the solitudes of Vaucluse, never responded with a prouder enthusiasm to the summons from the metropolis of the world, to receive in its capitol, and from the hands of a Senator of Rome, the laurel crown, as the reward of poetic merit, than would our gifted orator have obeyed the request of the members of his noble profession in that ancient University. But the triumph of

Petrarch was not reserved for our friend. His melancholy fate more solemnly reminds us of that other devoted child of Italian song, who had 'poured his spirit over Palestine,' and whose summons to the honors of the laurel wreath was but a summons to his grave."

The following is an extract from the letter of invitation :

In announcing this unanimous desire on the part of the Association, allow me to present to your notice the objects which it has in view, namely, "to give the Institution a national character, to promote its general welfare, to revive the pleasing memories of legal study, to elevate the standard of the legal profession, and to purify it from all sectional and party feelings." We are the disciples of the great legal fathers, and would assist in administering the law as we learn it from them, giving to every citizen the rights belonging to him under the Constitution.

You will meet a large number of young men from every State in the Union, and the members of the legal profession in Massachusetts; and it will be the greatest gratification to them to hear the voice of him so well known in the capitol, and whose remarks on the death of Mr. Adams have not yet faded from their ears.

On learning of his severe illness, the secretary wrote :

The pre-eminent regard, in which you are held, caused the Story Law Association to hope they might have the pleasure of hearing your voice as Orator of their First Anniversary; but the news of your ill-health has turned their expected joy into sadness. Hon. Daniel Webster has been chosen to deliver the Oration, and Hon. Wm. Kent has accepted the Presidency.*

* The pressure of public duties prevented Mr. Webster from delivering the address. His place, however, was well supplied by Mr. Choate, who pronounced an oration memorable alike for its high-toned, national sentiments, and for the rhetorical power and beauty with which they were expressed.—Ed.

The following is the last of that long series of letters to his mother, which had run on now through more than a quarter of a century :

NEW ORLEANS, *May* 9, 1850.

MY DEAREST MOTHER :—

I have been prostrated for three weeks by a severe attack of my old disease.* For ten days I have been lying on my back, unable to sit up, or scarcely to move. By the blessing of a kind Providence, I am now rapidly recovering, and in a few days shall, if I do not get a set-back, be entirely well. I attribute my attack to over-exertion in Court and exposure to the weather. I had been more or less affected by the disease all winter, but it was not so violent as to prevent my attention to business. Some very important cases, however, compelled me, during inclement weather, to attend Court many days in succession, which, doubtless, aggravated the malady, and brought on the bad spell from which I am just recovering. I think it will do me good. I have not felt better for a year, and all I want now is a little more strength. Day before yesterday was the first day I have been able to do anything.

I have begged Mary to write you often, as I could not myself. So I suppose she has advised you of the progress of my attack. I was delighted to learn of your safe arrival at Newark, and trust that you begin, by this time, to feel at home and to like the change. I think your move a most fortunate one, and cannot but believe you will be pleased with it.

At the earnest solicitation of her mother, Mary has concluded to give up our notion of spending the summer on the sea-shore, and will spend it at Longwood. In that event, I shall probably, in July, make a rapid trip to the Virginia Springs, and try the waters for a short time.

Give much love to Anna and Mr. Stearns and the children, also to William and his family. Remember me kindly and affectionately to Miss E—— K——. As soon as I get a little

* Chronic dysentery.—ED.

stronger, I will write you again. In the meantime, I remain as ever

Your most affectionate and devoted son,

S. S. Prentiss.

About three weeks later he wrote to me, in a strong, distinct hand, as follows. It was the last letter I ever received from him :

New Orleans, *June* 2, 1850.

My Dear Brother :—

I am—still thanks to a kind Providence—improving rapidly in health, though more slowly than I could wish in strength. It is certainly a very strange disease. One feels perfectly well, when the slightest imprudence throws everything aback, and one has to get well again from the beginning. I am dieting with great care; I eat nothing but tea and dry toast, with occasionally a little bit of lamb or mutton. Pastry, fruit, especially *apples*, are *mala prohibita*. For several days I have been entirely free from the disease, but am very weak and feeble; I shall not recover my strength till I get away from this enervating climate. I am staying at the St. Charles Hotel. Mary and the children went up to Longwood ten days ago; and, notwithstanding my weakness, my business in Court has kept me so busy during the time, that I have not been able to write you before. I believe I told you in my last how we had changed our plans, for the summer at least, and probably for next year. I have broken up housekeeping, and am going in for a general curtailment of expenses, to see if I cannot work out of debt. What a jubilee I would have if I could once again stand forth and say, I owe no man a cent! Well, I am going to strive for it. The rapid growth of our four beautiful children warns me that I must make some provision for their education. When Mary comes down in the winter to stay a month or so, I will take rooms. This arrangement will save from two thousand five hundred to three thousand dollars a year. One or two years will be something handsome.

At Longwood, in the meantime, they are all most delightfully situated among fruits, flowers, solitude, and salubrity. Since poor M.'s death, Mrs. Williams has been continually urging Mary to come and live at Longwood, awhile at least.* The house is large and commodious, and I am making all sorts of improvements for them. I shall be able to spend at least half of my time with them, and Mary will pass part of the winter here with me. Of course I shall suffer most from this temporary separation, but I cannot doubt it will be for the best. The children, especially, will grow up much more pure and healthy than it is possible for them to do among the little half-negro progeny of the Creoles of New Orleans.

I hope to get my business arranged for the summer in the course of two or three weeks, when I shall go up to Longwood, spend a fortnight with my family, and then go direct to the Virginia Springs. This course is advised by my physician, and I am inclined to think it best for restoring, what alone I now need, my strength. I shall strive to come on and take a fishing expedition with you, though not as early as you wish. My love to your dear family, and believe me always

Your most affectionate brother,

S. S. Prentiss.

Love to Anna, William, and their families. Enclose this to mother. I intended writing her to-day, but it tires me so much, I will put it off two or three days. I think she may rely confidently on seeing me this summer.

The final hour was now rapidly drawing near, and every thing seemed mercifully ordered to make ready for its advent. His wife, exhausted by heavy cares and incessant

* "I would not wish you to see the last Daguerre he had taken. Death is imprinted on his face. Alas! I have seen its approaches for the last twelve-months, and this was one reason why I was so anxious they should break up at New Orleans and come here for the summer. I hoped the quiet and the country air might restore his health; but, in any event, I desired we might *be all together*." —*Extract from a Letter of Mrs. W., dated, Longwood, July* 29, 1850.

vigils, had been persuaded by him, sorely against her will, to precede him with the children to Longwood ; the trouble of moving was thus past, and several weeks of rest were secured to strengthen her for the death-bed ministration. Indeed, when all was over, it was impossible to look back and not be struck with the many circumstances which indicated the hand of a kind Providence arranging the whole matter from beginning to end. How our Heavenly Father loves to alleviate the terror and brighten the memory of His sharp afflictions, by the halo of goodness wherewith He often invests them !

After the departure of his family he continued his labors with an almost insane energy, replying playfully to the remonstrances of friends who urged him to leave at once : "Oh ! but one cannot make a summer campaign North without *pecuniary ammunition!*" And this answer was, in his case, no mere jest. "Amid the excitement of the forum," says Judge McCaleb, "he was unconscious of the rapid decay of the organs of life. Heedless alike of the solemn admonitions of friends, and the increased debility of an overtasked and broken constitution, he continued, day after day, to redouble his exertions, and seemed to regulate his physical action by the mighty energies of a mind that scorned all sympathy with the feeble frame on which it was dependent for support. One of the most important arguments made by him before this tribunal—I allude to that in the case of the heirs of Pultney *vs.* the City of Lafayette—was delivered from his seat, his declining health rendering it impossible for him to stand in the presence of the Court ; and yet I may with confidence appeal to his able and generous antagonist on that occasion, to bear testimony to the systematic arrangement and masterly ability with which every argument, and all the learning that could tend to the elucidation

of the important questions involved, were presented to the Court."*

In the midst of this struggle with his mortal foe, he did not omit the solemn offices of friendship. A gifted young gentleman, to whom he was warmly attached, and who is said to have strongly resembled him in many points of intellect and character, died at this time in New Orleans of the same disease with which he himself was afflicted. The last effort of his pen was a touching tribute to the memory of this friend.

The following letters show how his heart yearned towards his wife and children, and how mindful he still was of whatever concerned their happiness :

NEW ORLEANS, *June* 10, 1850.

MY DEAREST WIFE :—

Mr. Hammet is going up to Lake Providence this evening on the Lowndes, and as "Old Joe" has just come over from the Pass, I send him up in Mr. H.'s charge. Mr. Hammet will not be able to stop, going or returning, for which I am sorry; but I shall certainly get him to spend a few days, at least, at Longwood, before I go North. It rains hard to-day, and therefore I am not able to send up anything by Joe. The other servants are all well.

I sent up quite a lot of things by Mr. R——, which I trust arrived safe and are acceptable. The balance I will bring with me. I shall endeavor to get through my business this week, and come up on the Princess next Tuesday. I am still convalescing, and my health is as good as I could expect; but I cannot get my strength, and suppose I shall not till I leave the city. I

* "Mr. PRENTISS, at the time of his death, stood in a peculiar relation to the citizens of Lafayette. He was leading counsel in the *Poultney Claim*, involving the title of a great part of the real estate of this city—a class of cases in which he had extraordinary success. He has left copious notes and an elaborate brief for his successor; but no one can wear the armor of Achilles."—*Lafayette* (*N. O.*) *Statesman.*

was never so anxious to leave a place in my life. I long for country air, and rest, and you, and the children. I suppose I shall stay with you about three weeks. It is quite probable we shall go up on the Bostona, which leaves here on the 5th of July, and will consequently leave Natchez on the 6th.

I am having made a splendid awning of water-proof canvas. I haven't got the pony yet and may fail here, so David had better be looking out for one about Natchez. One the children *must* have. Let the cistern at the stable go on; it is necessary, and therefore must be built. Kiss the dear children for papa, whose heart yearns towards them. I send love to all. God bless you, my dearest wife.

Your affectionate and devoted husband,

S. S. Prentiss.

New Orleans, *June* 15, 1850.

My Dearest Wife:

I have got everything nearly ready now, and unless something unexpected occurs, shall leave on the Princess on Tuesday, and be with you on Thursday morning. You may send in the cart for baggage, but not the carriage, as I shall bring up the buggy.

I have tried to get everything to make you comfortable, and think you will be pleased with some of my arrangements. We have had some fine rains here, which I hope have reached you, killed the gnats, and filled the cisterns.

I feel finely to-day, better than I have for two weeks. The last two or three days, however, I was quite feeble, and did not leave my room at all. I shall revive when I get to Longwood. I am very anxious to see you and the dear children, and look to two or three weeks of real enjoyment, before I go to Virginia. Did I tell you in my last that that fine, intelligent young friend of mine, Mr. Collins, of Lake Providence, died suddenly on Monday last? Hammet started the same day with the body for Providence, where his wife resides. He will be back to-day. I was much shocked at the event.

I have not found a pony yet; if I do not, I will have one, if

to be got in Adams county. The awning will be all ready to put up, so you had better be all ready for it. Much love to mother, and Mrs. C——, and all of you. Tell the children papa will soon be rolling over in the grass with them. God bless their little souls, how I long to see them!

Your affectionate and devoted husband,

S. S. Prentiss.

Towards the middle of June, as intimated in this letter, his malady returned with such violence as to create instant alarm among his friends, lest he should die before reaching his family. But, for several days, no entreaty could induce him to leave the city, or even to keep his bed. "I *must work*," he said. "Why, good sirs, a man cannot lie in bed and make his living!" On the 11th or 12th he rose early, in a state of much weakness, and ordered his faithful servant Richard, to get the buggy and drive him round the city. They stopped at the French market, where he bought some plums, ate them, and then rode to his office. Here he soon had a violent fainting turn. "I got him some ice water," such is the substance of Richard's account, "and rubbed him until he came to, and then took him to the St. Charles. As soon as he recovered a little, he seemed to throw it off, and talked and laughed just as he always did. That night he hardly slept at all. The next day he went to the Federal Court, and spoke, I reckon, two hours. The court-room was very crowded. I stood where I could see him all the time. He did not look feeble while speaking; the moment he began to speak he looked *just like himself*. But when he got through, he fainted, and I took him to the St. Charles. After resting and bathing, he smoked a cigar, and then fainted again, and then he came to, and talked as pleasantly as if nothing was the matter. That night he got no sleep at all."

The scene in Court is thus described by an eye-witness :*

"But a few days before leaving the city, his brilliant oratory and sparkling wit, like the last glimmerings of a bright light, shone in our court with their wonted effect, and electrified a large and delighted assemblage. It was on the examination of Gen. Lopez before Judge McCaleb.† The pleasure afforded by his extraordinary versatility was tinged by the consciousness which pervaded the whole assemblage, that it would be his last effort in the exercise of his noble oratory ! It was indeed a melancholy sight, to see so powerful an intellect, struggling with the decay of a body worn to the last stage of mortality. We felt that it would be the last opportunity we should have of gathering up for preservation and recollection, the brilliant thoughts that he was accustomed to fling from him as profusely as the orient pearls with which Aurora "gemmed the earth." We therefore noted down all that fell from him, and recorded in this journal the only report of the last display of his remarkable oratory. We recur to that report with melancholy feelings, but still with the pleasing associations which his eloquence and wit never failed to excite."

On Sunday, the 16th, he had a violent recurrence of the disease, lost his pulse, and was, for some time, in a state re-

* Mr. Walker, of the *New Orleans Delta*, whose very beautiful and wholehearted tribute to Mr. PRENTISS was all the more gracious for coming from a political opponent.

† In 1849, on our return from the North, we stopped a day in the Port of Havana. Your brother then saw and heard a great deal of the miserable state of affairs in Cuba. He expressed a strong desire to have the island purchased from Spain. I was not in New Orleans when he defended Lopez, but I think he was inclined to regard him as sincere and a patriot. He had no patience, however, with the American adventurers who accompanied Lopez. Indeed, nothing could be more severe than the manner in which he used to condemn Filibustering, and all concerned in it.—*Extract from a Letter, dated May* 30, 1855.—ED.

sembling the choleraic collapse, from which he was restored with extreme difficulty. In the course of the day, however, he was visited by an old friend, who found him in bed, but very cheerful, and with whom, for several hours, he conversed upon various important subjects in a strain unusually animated and instructive.

Monday he was compelled to keep his bed all day. He attempted once to ride to his office, and with great effort actually crept his way down stairs; but before reaching the carriage, he fainted, and Richard carried him again to his room. He slept well on Monday night, but Tuesday morning found him exceedingly ill, the fainting turns being very severe. Yet even then his wonted cheerfulness and pleasant humor did not forsake him; he seemed to look upon his case as a curiosity, a something apart from himself, and as one fatal symptom after another disclosed itself, he could not help moralizing upon it, or making it the occasion of sportive remark, somewhat in the mood of Hamlet at the grave of Yorick.

On Tuesday morning he consented to abandon the thought of business and hasten to his family. Mr. Hammet, who had just returned from his sad errand to Lake Providence, made instant preparation for his departure. Mr. H. was an old Mississippi friend, having been for several years Editor of the *Vicksburg Whig*, and during Mr. Prentiss' protracted sickness in April, as also in the spring of 1849, had watched over him by day and night, with truly fraternal affection. To this gentleman, since deceased, and to Richard, his devoted servant, it was chiefly owing that he ever lived to reach Natchez.

The moment the determination to stay and wind up his business was once broken—for he had remained and kept up by pure, indomitable force of will—his eagerness to get off was like that of a homesick child. The minutes were to

him as hours ; his mind seemed filled alone with the images of his absent wife and children, and the fear that he might never see them again.

About five o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, he was borne to the steamer. "We saw him," says the generous eulogist cited a moment ago, "on his way to the boat which bore him to Natchez, and as he passed a crowd of old friends, who were just then engaged in boisterous mirth, his dimmed eye and pallid face were lighted up with a momentary feeling of genial friendship, and pleasing reminiscences. The glance was received by all present, as the farewell of their old friend, and there was not an eye that did not glisten with its tear, nor a heart but sank, at the melancholy ruin which his wasted frame presented, of one of the noblest intellects and most chivalrous characters the Almighty ever bestowed upon the human form. It was our last view of Prentiss."

"As he was too weak to ride in a carriage," writes another friend, "a mattress was placed on a covered wagon for him to lie upon, and Dr. McCormack, I think, took the reins. A few of his friends walked down to the boat, taking care, however, not to follow the wagon. But we felt as if we were attending his funeral. Upon reaching the wharf he was carried on board in an arm-chair. Just as he reached the gangway, his eye caught mine from his elevated position ; instantly his countenance brightened, and casting on me a smile, with a graceful inclination of his head towards me, he asked, 'Any motions to make, gentlemen ?' I followed him on board, and took leave of him in his state-room. He was then so much debilitated that we feared he would not live to see Natchez." *

And now, if the reader is not weary of this sad story,

* Garrett Duncan, Esq.

let him follow the changing scene to Longwood, and see it quickly draw to a close. A description of the final act requires little more than brief extracts from letters written at the time or shortly after.

Longwood, *June* 20, 1850.—I snatch a moment, whilst your brother sleeps, to inform you of his arrival here, but regret to say how very feeble he is. As we were sitting on the gallery last night, General Stark, a friend of his, came up on the steps and said, "Mr. Prentiss will be here soon; he has been very ill." Just then the carriage drove slowly up, and we had a large chair taken out, brought him into the house and put him to bed. He was *so* glad to get here, and to see me once more; at one time he said he thought he would never see me again. He was taken very ill last Sunday, but after hard rubbing came to, and Mr. Hammet, accompanied by Gen. Stark and Dr. Cross, left with him Tuesday evening and reached here last night about 8 o'clock.

Mr. H. says, he longed exceedingly to get here, begging them to "take him home." I never saw him so low. He seems better to-day than he was yesterday; for the change is so agreeable to him. The flowers, the birds, and the pure air revive him.* But the disease still goes on, and keeps me in the deepest anxiety of mind. He won't be able to leave here, I fear, this summer. We never can be grateful enough to Mr. H. for all his kindness, but God will reward him. He has gone back to the city, but promises to pay us a visit soon. He will write you fully as soon as he reaches New Orleans. I would give anything to see you. Write often and *pray for us.*

June 21.—I wrote the above yesterday, and kept it to add a

* I omitted to mention how his passion for flowers returned during his sickness. The night of his arrival, though he was so very ill, and had nearly died on the boat, he requested Mrs. C. to gather *half a bushel* of roses, with the dew on them, which he had put in a large basin, and the stand placed by his bedside. He then expatiated to every one on their beauty, and the delight their fragrance and the sight of them gave him. Jeanie and Geordie frequently strew his grave with flowers, because their poor papa loved flowers. They never see one without expressing a wish thus to appropriate it.—*Letter from Mrs. W. dated Longwood, July* 29, 1850.

few lines this morning. I am happy to say that your brother is better to-day, but still very, very feeble. I can hardly hear a word he says, his voice is so weak; and he is very thin. I was so shocked at the change in him, for when I left he was doing well, and in the last letter I got from him, he said he was better than he had been for several weeks. He has the best medical advice, Dr. Sydney Smith staying with us day and night. Mamma and Mrs. C. take the children off my hands, so that I can devote myself wholly to him. He has every comfort and convenience here, and his room filled with flowers all day long. He says he will be up and riding in a day or two.

LONGWOOD, *June* 23.—He is a little better to-day, though as feeble as ever. He can hardly speak, and is so nervous that he can't bear the least noise. Thursday he was a little better, and a great many of his friends came to see him, and kept him so much excited—Thursday and Friday—that Friday night I thought he would hardly live till morning. So yesterday I allowed no one to see him, except his physicians, and he is better, as I have said, though still very low.

June 25.—The chance in his favor has slightly increased since yesterday; but he is just hovering between life and death. That he still lives, is beyond all hope or expectation; we know not what an hour may bring forth. All that mortal aid can do we have done; the rest remains with our Heavenly Father, who wills and directs all things in wisdom.* We have only to watch and pray that this blow may be spared us. In his wildest

* The hand of God has been laid heavily upon me; I acknowledge it, I feel it, and trust it is in love. I thank Him for all His mercies, mingled with this affliction; that my child and her children were safely removed here, and that your brother was permitted to reach us and to die among friends such as, surely, never mortal man had before! It would be vain to describe their affectionate solicitude or their kindness. We had to decline innumerable offers. David, Col. Bingaman, Mr. Shields, Gen. Huston, Mr. Evans, the whole S. family, my sister's family, the Sargents, his physicians, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Metcalf, scarcely left the house. If human aid could have availed, he would have been spared.—*Letter from Mrs. W., dated Longwood, July* 29, 1850.

moments he fancies his mother and the rest of you are present, addresses and takes leave of you all; at other times, he tells Mary to write you that he is dying.

July 1.—My mother has written to you several times since I last wrote, for my heart was too full to write, and I have been constantly engaged night and day. It is one week to-day since he became delirious, and, excepting lucid intervals, he has continued so up to this time. * * * At first his mind was full of his business; he talked about his suits, raising money, and his children; feeling, I suppose, that he was leaving them destitute, and trying to think what he could do to provide for them. He called me several times and told me to "be sure and do it;" but I could not learn what he was alluding to. Yesterday I thought he would die every moment, but last evening he took some nourishment, and has slept well all night. He is still asleep, and we can't tell how he will awake. I pray and trust that he may be refreshed by this long sleep, and awake himself; but I fear I am hoping too much, and am willing to leave all in the hands of God.—MARK, xiv. 36.

He has called for you all by name again and again during his illness, particularly for his mother. "Dear mother, *do you love me?*" he would say; and "dear, dear mother" has been constantly on his lips. Her early instructions, and her prayers, were, no doubt, in his mind. He has also called repeatedly upon God. One day when he was very low, and much distressed at the idea of death, I urged him to go to the Saviour, and repeated to him many sentences from the Bible; but he said God would never forgive him, that I did not know how wicked he had been. I told him only to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and "*though his sins were as scarlet they should be white as snow.*" This seemed to quiet his fear. I begged him to pray, and asked him if he didn't remember how his mother used to teach him? He said, "Oh, yes," and desired me to pray with him; and I then repeated to him the Lord's Prayer. Several times he has said, "Amen, Amen," as if he were praying. Yesterday I heard him saying, as if to himself,

"*Oh God, the Son!*" recalling, I suppose, the petition in the Litany.*

We are all now watching, hoping, praying and trembling for him to awake. God grant that all may be right with him!

From the moment of his arrival until this sleep, even in the height of delirium, his expressions of love and devotion to his faithful wife, were indescribably touching. He could not bear her out of his sight for an instant; his eyes would follow her wistfully about the room, and if he could not see her, he would rise up in bed and call her loudly by name, until she came. From her hands alone would he take either medicine or nourishment, and the thought of dying and leaving her, several times threw him into convulsions of grief.

MARY! was the last word he ever uttered. It was on Sabbath evening. She went to him, and, sitting up in bed, he kissed her, gave her a sweet smile, and begged her to sit at the *foot*, instead of the side of the bed, so that he might see her the moment he should awake. He then sank back into a gentle infant-like slumber, which grew deeper and deeper, until, on Monday evening, July 1, a little before seven o'clock, without a sigh or a groan, it changed into the mysterious sleep of the grave!

The same hands that had so tenderly ministered to him while living, closed his eyes in death; and on Tuesday his mortal part was committed to the earth, *dust to dust*, in a quiet rural spot on the family grounds at Longwood. It is almost within sight of the majestic river which bore him to Natchez, a limping boy, and whose resistless current symbolized so well the manly energy and power of his eloquence. The burial service was solemnized by the Right Rev. W. M.

* *O God the Son, Redeemer of the World; have mercy upon us miserable sinners!*

Green, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Mississippi, in the presence of a large assemblage, whose tears watered the grave of him whom all loved and whom all admired.

The reader will find elsewhere some friendly notices of Mr. Prentiss' life and character, and of the great sorrow caused by his death. But there was that about him which no words can depict; and those who loved him most—whether in the land of his birth or of his adoption—will never cease to exclaim, as they remember his living form and presence:

> The rainbow comes and goes,
> And lovely is the rose,
> The moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare;
> Waters on a starry night
> Are beautiful and fair;
> The sunshine is a glorious birth;
> But yet I know, where'er I go,
> That there hath past away a glory from the earth.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

APPENDIX.

Soon after the death of Mr. PRENTISS, impressive tributes were paid to his memory by the Bars of Louisiana and Mississippi. The press, too, especially in the Southwest, contained very friendly and heartfelt obituary notices. Here follows a selection from these various tributes. The proceedings of the Bars of New Orleans, Jackson, and Natchez, are given entire, a few slight omissions being made in the speeches only.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BAR OF NEW ORLEANS.

According to the short notice given only in the papers of the morning, a large number of the bar assembled at the Supreme Court room on Saturday, July 6. J. P. Benjamin moved that Christian Roselius be requested to act as Chairman, and John Finney as Secretary. Mr. Roselius made a brief, but impressive speech, when he was followed by Judge Bullard, the oldest member present, who prefaced a motion to appoint a committee to draw up resolutions, with the following beautiful and touching eulogy on the character of his deceased friend:

Mr. President and Gentlemen:—It would have been more appropriate if some younger man than myself—some one more nearly of the same age with our lamented brother, had been called to address you on the melancholy occasion of our meeting. I am old enough to have been his father, and yet there have existed between us for the last twenty years the kind and cordial relations of brothers. I have passed that age from which alone would be expected the fervor and eloquence suited to this occasion, and worthy of the deceased. From me, you can expect nothing more than the unpremeditated tribute of a heart full of the subject, dictated by a friendship of long duration and a deep and ardent admiration of the remarkable abilities and worth of the deceased, as a man and a Lawyer.

When I first became acquainted with PRENTISS, more than twenty years ago, he was a mere youth just emerging from the humble condition of a schoolmaster at Natchez. A few partial friends and generous Mississippians, discovering in him indications of uncommon endowments, had encouraged him to adopt the law as his

profession. And here let me say to you, gentlemen, that the schoolmaster is as it were the chrysalis form of the great men—the eminent Lawyers and Statesmen of New England. Before they expand their wings and develop their full powers and energies, they for the most part have passed through that condition—imparting instruction while at the same time they are drawing in those copious stores of knowledge and practising that patient and laborious system of research, which renders them great in after life. Need I mention names? I would rather ask who has not been at some period of his life a schoolmaster, from the time of John Adams down to the present day. I myself learned the first rudiments of letters from a man who became afterwards the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire, and my younger brothers were taught at one time by no less a man than the present distinguished Judge Woodbury of the Supreme Court of the United States. PRENTISS passed through this severe mental ordeal and soon emerged into active life, a brilliant genius and an accomplished scholar. It was not long before the renown of his oratory blazed through the whole country, and his reputation as an advocate became co-extensive with the Republic.

He was a native of the State of Maine—the most northern part of the Union. Reasoning *a priori*, one would naturally suppose he would have possessed merely an understanding and judgment as solid and compact as the granite of her hills, and a temperament as cold as her climate. Who would have expected to find in a child of Maine, the fiery, inventive genius of an Arabian poet?—an imagination as fertile in original and fantastical creations, as the author of the thousand and one nights? Let us not imagine that nature is so partial in the distribution of her gifts. The flora of more Southern climes is more gorgeous and variegated, but occasionally there springs up in the cold North, a flower of as delicate a perfume as any within the tropics. The heavens in the equatorial regions are bright with the golden radiance, and the meteors shoot with greater effulgence through the air—but over the snow-clad hills of the extreme North, flash from time to time the glories of the *Aurora Borealis*. Under the line are found more numerous volcanoes, constantly throwing up their ashes and their flames, but none of them excel in grandeur the Northern Hecla, from whose deep caverns roll the melted lava down its ice-bound sides.

I think I can assert with confidence, that PRENTISS possessed the most brilliant imagination of any man of this day. He had more of the talent of the Italian *improvisatore* than any man living, or who ever lived in this country. It is a great error to suppose that he was a mere declaimer. On the contrary, there was found always at the bottom a solid basis of deep thought. He never preached without a text. Even on convivial occasions, when he gave full rein to his fancy, his oratory consisted of something more than merely gorgeous imagery, sparkling wit and brilliant periods. He sought to illustrate some great truth. He was not satisfied with stringing together a few smart sentences and common-place remarks, but that rich profusion of brilliant metaphors, which he threw out on such occasions, tended to illustrate some great, important principle. Such was his remarkable gift of throwing an attractive beauty over every subject upon which his imagination lighted, that under his hand a truism became a novelty.

As a lawyer, I can testify that PRENTISS was diligent—even indefatigable in his researches. His arguments were always solid and thorough. It has, indeed, been sometimes objected that he pressed his arguments beyond conviction. He never drove a nail that he did not clinch it, and, sometimes, perhaps, by clinching it too

tight, broke off the head. For it is, permit me to say, sometimes the fault of lawyers of great intellectual vigor and fertility of imagination, that they push an argument so far as to produce the impression that their own convictions are not altogether sincere and satisfactory to themselves. But PRENTISS possessed the peculiar faculty of rendering every subject which he treated attractive and interesting. When he attended the courts in the country, and it was given out that he was to speak, he was sure to attract a large audience of ladies and gentlemen. I remember a case in the Supreme Court in the Western District in which he was engaged. The court-house was crowded, and a large number of ladies graced the room. It was a simple case of usury, which most of us would have argued by reference to a few adjudicated cases and upon general principles. In the hands of PRENTISS it became a prolific theme for the richest imagery, and the most striking novel illustrations. Shylock became ten times more hideous and revolting in his picture of the modern usurer, while at the same time he argued the legal questions involved with singular vigor and acuteness. Indeed, there was no subject so dry—no chasm so deep, but he could span it over with the rainbow of his imagination—a rainbow in which the most varied hues were beautifully commingled in one gorgeous arch of light.

The fame of such a man could not be narrowed down to the limits of a single State, or section of our country. It extended over the Union. It shone with splendor in the Halls of Congress, in other cities and States, and wherever he passed, he was called on to address the people upon the great topics of the day. Even in Faneuil Hall, I have been assured, Faneuil Hall, whose walls re-echoed the first cry of Liberty and Independence—where the greatest orators of their day thundered forth their noblest efforts—where the impassioned eloquence of the elder, and the silvery tones of the younger Otis, had been uttered—where the Dexters, the Everetts, and Choate, and Webster, and others had maintained their ascendency over that cool, reflecting and intellectual people—even there, when PRENTISS appeared and poured forth the torrent of his gorgeous elocution, his auditors sprang to their feet under the influence of his magic power.

I have heard most of the eminent men of the day, and can freely say that I have never heard any man who combined in so eminent a degree, the reasoning faculty with brilliancy of fancy, felicity of language, and copiousness of illustration. There are undoubtedly more learned men, more perfect scholars and rhetoricians—more skilled in polishing a sentence and taming a metaphor; but none from whom rolled forth, as it were spontaneously, such brilliant thought, and startling and novel figures. In this respect his speeches resembled the displays of the skillful pyrotechnist—his metaphors, thrown up like rockets in the evening sky, and bursting as they rose into a thousand dazzling points of every imaginable color.

But, gentlemen, I fear I shall weary your patience—that I am becoming garrulous. I hardly knew how to begin, and now I know not how to finish, the theme is so attractive and inexhaustible.

What can I say of the noble qualities of his heart? Who can describe the charms of his conversation in moments of relaxation and social intercourse? Old as I am, his society was one of my greatest pleasures. I became a boy again. His conversation resembled the ever-varying clouds that cluster round the setting sun of a summer evening—their edges fringed with gold, and the noiseless and harmless flashes of lightning spreading, from time to time, over their dark bosoms. Who would have thought that I, whose career is ended—that I, whose sands are fast

dropping away—that I, with my age and physical infirmities—I, whose children no longer require a father's solicitude, should have survived to pay this feeble tribute to his memory, while he, the young, the noble-hearted, the gifted—in the fullness of his fame and usefulness—sinks into an early grave, and leaves behind him a youthful and pious wife, and four orphan children, to weep for his loss. How inscrutable are the ways of Providence!

And here let me say, that I thank the editors of the Delta most heartily for the just and eloquent eulogium, published in their late number, upon the virtues and the genius of the lamented deceased. It does equal credit to the head and the heart of the author, and is one of the most touching and eloquent effusions I have ever read. It furnishes a proof of what I was about to say, that the talents and virtues of Mr. PRENTISS were equally appreciated, and he was equally esteemed and beloved by every political party or coterie in society.

Gentlemen, it is the fate of great *improvisatori*, that though they exercise a powerful influence over their contemporaries, and their fame is brilliant and extended in their day, they leave behind them but few and faint memorials of their greatness and their genius. Such is eminently the case with Patrick Henry and SEARGENT S. PRENTISS. The effect of their eloquence lives mainly in the memory of those who enjoyed the rare happiness of hearing them. Very little remains of all the powerful displays of Patrick Henry, except the meagre sketch of a speech or two preserved by his biographer. How many brilliant effusions we have all heard from PRENTISS, of which there is no permanent record, and which must pass away with the memories of those who listened to them. Permit me to allude to one occasion which many of you may remember, and which illustrates this remark. Some years ago, a public meeting was called at Dr. Clapp's Church, with a view to raise a subscription to procure a statue of Franklin, to be executed by the great American artist, Hiram Powers. The occasion called forth all the eloquence and stores of erudition of Richard Henry Wilde, then fresh from the classic scenes of Italian art. It happened that PRENTISS had just arrived in the city, without any knowledge of such a meeting. He was dragged into the church by some of his friends, and, to avoid observation, took his seat in a side aisle. As soon as Mr. Wilde had closed, there was a cry for PRENTISS, PRENTISS! He came forward, obviously surprised and embarrassed, but, warming with the theme as he advanced, proceeded to pour forth to an enchanted audience one of the most brilliant and remarkable bursts of eloquence, which, I venture to assert, ever fell from any individual so suddenly and unexpectedly called on.* A stranger would have supposed that he

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* The following is taken from the *N. O. Picayune*, of July 9, 1850. The letter was written by the Rev. Theodore Clapp.—ED.

Oratory of the Late S. S. PRENTISS.

The following letter, by a gentleman remarkable for his own powers of mind and discriminating taste, revives the recollection of one of those extemporaneous addresses with which the late S. S. PRENTISS used to electrify his hearers whenever he was prevailed upon to speak in public on any theme. It is doubtless as faithfully recorded as an accurate memory would allow, and presents truly the train of thought and illustration, but it was always impossible for pen to follow him in the soaring flights of his imagination, the exuberant beauty of his imagery, the fire of his genius, or the depth and tenderness of his pathos. We doubt whether he could have reported himself justly, even if he had had patience to attempt it. Hence the brilliant thoughts which he threw out with such careless profusion, and which coruscated so incessantly whenever he spoke, were seldom caught and retained. They

had done nothing during his life, but study the poets and the fine arts, and was familiar with the best models. He exhibited on that occasion an extraordinary familiarity with the poets and the arts, and no one would have supposed he had

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live only in the memory of the effect which they produced, in swaying the hearts and controlling the actions of others with absolute mastership, and in the universal acknowledgment that he had no peer or rival as an orator. His fame, alas, must be traditional; for of all his great efforts that have so charmed and convinced listening crowds, till the rapt soul feasting on the harmonies that issued from his lips, became insensible to the lapse of time, as though they were "lapped in Elysium," nothing remains but skeletons from which the life has flown. One who could restore to us a speech of PRENTISS such as he delivered it, reviving the marvellous effect upon his hearers, would be entitled to public gratitude. We are thankful, too, to any one who, like our correspondent, is able to reproduce detached passages which preserve something of the fertility and power of the departed orator.

NEW ORLEANS, *July* 8, 1850.

To the Editors of the Picayune:—Judge Bullard, in his speech on the character of the late S. S. PRENTISS, published in the Delta of the 7th inst., refers to a meeting which was held some years ago, in the First Congregational Church, to devise measures for procuring a statue of Franklin. I was present on that occasion, and can testify to the correctness of the picture so ably sketched in the beautiful eulogium pronounced by Judge Bullard. After retiring to my room on the evening above alluded to, I set down in a note-book some reminiscences of the concluding part of Mr. PRENTISS's address. Though I am aware that they must sound tame and frigid to those who had the good fortune to be present on that occasion, yet, it is possible, that their perusal may be interesting to some friends of the deceased, who are acquainted with that brilliant and remarkable display of oratory by report only. I can convey no adequate idea of the original. "To have caught up its brilliant scintillations would have been as difficult as to have snatched the meteors as they shoot athwart the sky." What I could call to mind of the peroration just referred to was recorded as follows:

"*Ladies and Gentlemen*—The most splendid cities, mausoleums and pyramids must crumble to dust, but the genius embodied in the picture and the statue and the literary page is like the mind of man endued with immortality. The physical forms of Greece and Rome flitted across the horizon like the shadows of a cloud passing over a verdant field in a summer's afternoon; but the productions of her heaven-born artists still live and hold a preëminent place in the admiration of the civilized world. They will go down on an accumulating tide of glory to succeeding generations, even to the last recorded syllable of time.

> 'Hail spirits, born in happier days;
> Immortal heirs of universal praise;
> Whose honors with increase of ages grow,
> As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
> Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
> And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!'

"The Pantheon of Greece was filled with the creations of immortal genius. Its deities were the same beings whom genuine poets of every clime and land see in their day-dreams on the ocean's rocky shores, or by the gurgling fountain, or in the shady grove, or on the mountain's craggy steep, or along the gentle stream meandering through the sweetest charms of rural scenery. Her statues, paintings and poetry have kindled the imagination and touched the hearts of all cultivated ages and nations to the present day. Her mission was to inspire the human race with a profound, eternal admiration of the great, good and beautiful. The visions of loveliness which she delineated can never fade, because they are true to nature, and consequently secure to her an illustrious and deathless name.

"As a Republic, we possess all the advantages of civil and religious freedom. We have the means and appliances of a boundless physical prosperity. But the American people especially require a more acute perception and lively enjoyment of the refining, and endlessly diversified beauties of nature and art. These would emancipate them from the dominion of those gross, sensual indulgencies, which so

ever read a law book in his life. And yet, of that speech there remains not the slightest vestige. It could not, indeed, have been well reported. To have caught up its brilliant scintillations would have been as difficult as to sketch the meteors that shoot through the sky. Indeed, I may say that if all the great and brilliant thoughts that fell from PRENTISS in popular and deliberative assemblies, in courts of justice, at convivial parties, and in his social intercourse, could have been faithfully reported by a stenographer, it would form a work truly Shakespearean. There would be found beautifully blended, the broad humor of Falstaff, the keen wit of Mercutio, the subtlety of Hamlet, and the overwhelming pathos of Lear.

But, alas! the wand of Prospero is broken. We shall no more hear the eloquent tones of his voice, nor admire the specious miracles produced by the inspiration of his genius; for he possessed the only inspiration vouchsafed to man in these latter days. We shall no longer be permitted to laugh over his mirth-provoking wit, nor be melted by his touches of true feeling—nor admire those rich gems which he threw out with such profusion from the exhaustless stores of his imagination. Such is the destiny of all earthly things—

> "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples—the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

It is deeply to be lamented, gentlemen, that while through a prostituted press, the penny literature of the day is likely to engross the minds and imaginations of the rising generation, the elevated and noble sentiments and the brilliant expressions

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extensively prevail in the United States, under the name of amusements or necessary recreations. Our sons, familiarized from childhood with the exquisite miracles of superior genius, would grow up enabled to comprehend and feel the loveliness and grandeur that pervade the whole creation, and which in vain court the notice of the illiterate and vulgar. In the training of youth, nothing is more important than to excite in them a lively relish for the entertainments of taste. A cultivated sensibility to the elegant and grand, is, of itself, almost sufficient to inspire a young man with the noble spirit of patriotism, a passion for true glory, a contempt for all that is mean in principle and conduct, and a profound admiration of everything truly great, immaculate and illustrious. Let it be remembered, also, that the enjoyments which arise from a delicate perception of the beautiful, are congenial with the tenderest and holiest sentiments of religion, and are a foretaste of that refined, unimaginable bliss that awaits the good in the fair and glorious mansions of immortality. Let us rest assured then, ladies and gentlemen, that by furthering the object for which this meeting is called, we shall at least contribute our mite towards the promotion of that social refinement, peace, order and morality that are indispensably necessary to perpetuate our civil and religious liberties."

As this memorandum was made at the time and on the spot, it may be relied upon as a tolerably faithful account of the ideas contained in the concluding part of Mr. PRENTISS'S address on the above-mentioned occasion. The writer did not attempt to give a sample of his inimitable style. The orator was most modest and unpretending in his manner. He appeared to be quite unconscious of the effect which he was producing on the minds of his audience. His periods of ardent and glowing diction, his rich, original and beautiful figures, flowed from him without effort. He seemed to speak from the impulse of some superior power that he could not resist. I have listened to the most distinguished orators on both sides of the Atlantic, but never before or since witnessed an outburst of such profound, original and impressive eloquence.

Yours, &c.

of such a mind should be lost to the world and have no permanent and tangible form.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I move that a committee be appointed, to draft resolutions, expressive of the feelings of the bar on this occasion.*

The Chair then appointed the following gentlemen on said committee: Messrs. H. A. Bullard, R. N. Ogden, and J. C. Larue, who retired and afterwards reported the following resolutions:

The committee appointed at a public meeting of the Bench and Bar of New Orleans to prepare resolutions expressive of their feelings on the melancholy occasion of the death of the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS, respectfully report—

That this sudden and lamentable event has covered the whole community with gloom; and is a general calamity and a public bereavement. That the illustrious deceased, although but for a few years one of our bar, had become entirely identified with us, and was of us; and we mourn him as a lost, and loved, and honored brother—and that feeling it due alike to his great worth and to our duty to place on permanent record a respectful tribute to his memory, we resolve—

1. That the Bench and the Bar of New Orleans, and the whole legal profession, have sustained a great and an irreparable loss in the death of their lamented brother, the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS.

2. That his urbanity of deportment, his generosity of disposition, his childlike simplicity of manners, his genial kindness and gentleness in every act and word of private intercourse, endeared him to all who knew him, and made them forget in that intercourse the towering genius which so often commanded their admiration.

3. That as a forensic orator he was unrivalled in the versatility of his powers, in the richness and vigor of his fancy, in the range and readiness of his illustrations, in his wit, and humor, and pathos, and in a rare combination with these brilliant gifts of a remarkable power of logical analysis, and legal acumen.

4. That although he came to this State in the maturity of his fame as an advocate, from one in which a system of law totally differing from our own prevailed, and subjected himself to an ordeal always dangerous and often fatal to distinguished reputations, we his brethren and competitors take pleasure and pride in bearing our testimony to his eminent and distinguished success in reaching at a very early

* The reader will perceive that Judge Bullard fell into the error, before-mentioned, of supposing that Mr. P. was induced to study law by friends in Natchez. Judge B. writes, under date of WASHINGTON, January 25, 1851: "I rejoice to learn that you are engaged in the pious task of writing the memoirs of your late much-loved brother. * * I am happy also to learn from you that the off-hand effusion of mine, addressed without preparation to the Bar of New Orleans, was acceptable to the family of my departed friend. I felt every word I uttered. There was some similarity in the early fortunes of myself and your brother. Both left his native home in early life to better our condition; each begun as a teacher, and adopted the same profession; and although I was twenty years, perhaps, his senior in age, we were thrown a good deal together for many years before his death. I am sensible that on the occasion referred to, I neither did full justice to him nor to myself."

Judge Bullard was, I think, a native of New Hampshire, and a gentleman of high literary and social culture. After retiring from the Bench, he occupied one of the Law Professorships in the University of Louisiana; and at the time of his death, was a Representative in Congress from that State.—ED.

period a station in the front rank of the profession here, and in doing full justice to the expectations created by his former brilliant career.

5. That it would be unjust to speak of him only as a lawyer; and that a profession which has at all times furnished the foremost champions of free and liberal principles, may justly be proud of him as a patriot, as a statesman of enlarged views, as a fearless advocate of what he deemed the right, and that the lines of a great poet to whom he bore a remarkable intellectual resemblance, applied to a distinguished English orator, may with singular truth be applied to him.

> "His eloquence brightening whatever it tried,
> Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave;
> Was as rapid, and deep, and brilliant a tide,
> As ever bore freedom aloft on its wave."

6. That the Attorney General be requested to present a copy of the proceedings of this meeting to the Supreme Court, at the opening of the next term, and move, on behalf of the bar, that they be spread upon the minutes of the Court.

7. That a committee of five be appointed by the Chair to transmit a copy of these proceedings to the widow of the deceased, and express in suitable terms our deep and respectful sympathy and condolence.

The following committee was then appointed to communicate a copy of said resolutions with a letter of condolence to the wife of Mr. PRENTISS, viz: Messrs. G. B. Duncan, J. P. Benjamin, W. W. King, E. A. Bradford and W. L. Poindexter.

It was then moved in respect to the memory of the deceased that the members of the bar wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days.

The meeting then adjourned.

Here follow a few passages from the article in the New Orleans *Delta*, alluded to by Judge Bullard:

One of the most gifted men this country ever produced has fallen in the very meridian of his genius and usefulness! SEARGENT S. PRENTISS is no more!

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A weak and debilitated boy, with gentle lisp, and supported by a sustaining cane, was soon seen stealing away the technical hearts of stern judges, and weaving seductive tales in the honest ears of sworn jurymen. Resistless as the penetrating breeze, his juvenile eloquence searched every avenue of thought and feeling. The classic page, and the varied mass of modern literature were conveniently stored away in the massy caverns of his broad and fertile intellect. A close train of didactic reasoning on the most abstruse legal topic, was lit up with the pyrotechnic fires of fancy. The most ordinary incidents of life, the merest common-places, were caught up on the wings of his imagination and blended and effectively commingled, in his illustrative oratory, with the boldest and most gorgeous metaphors.

With such talents, it will excite no surprise that he met with the most brilliant success at the bar. Located at Vicksburg, almost at one bound he leaped into the very highest position at the bar of Mississippi.

Few men in this country have ever risen more rapidly, or sustained themselves more successfully. Of Mr. PRENTISS' career as a politician, we need not speak—it

will be found in the history of the country. His speeches in Congress secured him the most extended reputation as an orator. But, in truth, he had no taste for political life. He soon returned to his favorite arena—the bar—and resumed his splendid practice. The financial troubles of 1836, fell upon Mr. PRENTISS with great force. He lost by them a princely fortune. In consequence of these reverses, he removed to this city, as affording a larger sphere for the exercise of his talents. Here he immediately took his position among the foremost of our lawyers. Many gentlemen of the bar, of great eminence in States where the Common Law prevails, had not sustained here the reputation which they brought with them. Mr. PRENTISS was an exception to this remark. The remarkable quickness and analytical power of his intellect, enabled him, in a very short time, to master the rules and theory of a system of jurisprudence quite different from that in which he had long been trained. He soon achieved a position at the bar of New Orleans as prominent as that he had occupied in Mississippi. Nor was his mind "cribbed, cabined and confined" within the narrow limits of a mere professional life. He always identified himself with every project of patriotism, benevolence, charity, or literature, that was agitated in his vicinage. A monument to Franklin, or a sympathetic appeal in favor of struggling Hungary, or a donative response to the tearful orphan, or a commemoration of the birthday of the Bard of Avon, would equally fire his soul and syllable his tongue. He possessed one of the most highly-endowed intellects we ever knew. His memory was singularly retentive, so that he could repeat whole cantos of Byron on the moment. His logical faculty was very acute and discerning. It was often the complaint of the court and his brother lawyers, that he would argue a case all to pieces. He would penetrate to the very bottom of a subject, as it were, by intuition, and lay it bare in all its parts, like a chemist analyzing any material object, or a surgeon making a dissection. His reading was full and general, and everything he gathered from books, as well as from intercourse with his fellow-men, clung to his memory, and was ever at his command. But, his most striking talent was his oratory. We have never known or read of a man, who equalled PRENTISS in the faculty of thinking on his legs, or of extemporaneous eloquence. He required no preparation to speak on any subject, and on all he was equally happy. We have heard from him, thrown out in a dinner-speech, or at a public meeting, when unexpectedly called on, more brilliant and striking thoughts than many of the most gifted poets and orators ever elaborated in their closets. He possessed a rare wit. His garland was enwreathed with flowers culled from every shrub or plant, and from every clime. And if at times the thorn lurked beneath the bright flower, the wound it inflicted was soon assuaged and healed by some mirthful and laughter-moving palliative.

But our article grows too long, and we must bring it to a close before we have said a tithe of what justice to the subject would require us to say.

We conclude, therefore, with bearing tribute to the estimable character of S. S. PRENTISS. His heart overflowed with warm, generous, and patriotic feelings. He was as brave and chivalrous as Bayard,—as soft, tender, and affectionate as a loving child, untainted by the selfishness of the world. All small, selfish, narrow feelings, were foreign to his nature. His bosom was the home of honor,—his imagination was full of lofty thoughts, and his mind disdained the grovelling feelings and considerations of the worldly-minded. Let not his friends be inconsolable.

It is proper that such a mind should thus glide from these scenes of worldly trouble. It is just that a bright exhalation, which has shone so brilliantly, should

disappear thus suddenly, ere it begins gradually to fade and flicker; that the fire of so noble an intelligence, should not diminish, and gradually and slowly go out, amid decrepitude and physical decay; but that, like the meteor shooting across the heavens, illuminating the earth, it should sink suddenly and for ever, into the earth from which it sprung!

The following is from the pen of J. F. H. Claiborne, Esq., one of Mr. PRENTISS' opponents in the Mississippi contested election:

This distinguished orator—distinguished above all his contemporaries for the versatility of his talents, the brilliancy of his imagination and the affluence of his diction—died, at Natchez, on Monday evening last, after a protracted illness. He was not more than thirty-five years of age, but had already placed himself on an equality with the giants of the land. In the firmament of the Republic there shone no brighter star. He was endowed with more genius than any man we ever met with—the genius that comprehends all things, achieves all things, and perishes, as the hero of Macedonia perished, because there are no more difficulties to overcome, "no more worlds to conquer." Mr. PRENTISS, in addressing a jury, has never been surpassed; pith, pathos, humor, fiery declamation, biting sarcasm, wonderful power of illustration, were the characteristics of his oratory on these occasions, and so expressive were his action and the play of his countenance, that even when you failed to hear him, you comprehended what he had said. His great *forte* was in the analysis of a point of law, or the discussion of a constitutional question. His style then became terse, simple, severe, exhibiting a mental discipline and a faculty of concentration, in striking contrast with the natural exuberance of his fancy. It was observed of Apelles' Venus that her flesh looked as if she had been nourished on roses; the same may be said of the orations of this remarkable man. Whenever he touched on literature or art, his classical taste sparkled in every sentence; images tinted with the colors of the rainbow, dew-drops of thought, the very essence of poetry, fell profusely from his lips. The only speech he ever made in Congress, on a question of peculiar delicacy and importance, placed him at once among the greatest orators of our time; and even his opponents applied to him the remark of Coleridge on Canning—"that he flashed such a light around the constitution, it was difficult to see the ruins of the fallen fabric through it." With so much genius, Mr. PRENTISS might have become eminent in any pursuit—as a poet, an artist or a soldier. He had all the elements of greatness, and all the ambition to become great. But the orb that burned so brightly has disappeared; the tones that charmed, the clarion voice that roused, are silent, and for ever. With his fire unquenched—his aspirations unsatisfied—his mission unfulfilled—the harvest of wealth and power still ungathered—the reaper, in his pride of manhood, has been struck down by the only enemy that could conquer him, and now lies low as the undistinguished dead, to teach us "what shadows we are and what shadows we pursue." Friends and enemies deplore the gallantry of feelings which gave to his views a chivalrous elevation; those beautiful accomplishments which embellished the society in which he lived; the fire and sparkling wit which fascinated those who were most adverse to his principles, and charmed, as with a spell, the very men who were most aware of its seductions.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BAR OF NATCHEZ.

Extract from the Minutes of the Vice-Chancery Court, of the Southern District of Mississippi, at

NATCHEZ, *July* 2, 1850.

On the meeting of the Vice Chancery Court this morning, Mr. McMurran announced to the Court the death of the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS, late a most distinguished member of the Bar of this State. After some feeling and appropriate remarks on the melancholy event, he moved the Vice Chancellor that as a tribute of respect for the memory of the deceased, the court adjourn.

Whereupon his Honor, sympathizing with the Bar on the occasion, adjourned the Court until to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Immediately after the adjournment of the Court, the members of the Bar of the State in attendance on the Vice-Chancery Court, at Natchez, were, on motion of R. M. Gaines, Esq., organized as a meeting, with his Honor, James M. Smiley, as Chairman, and on motion of H. S. Eustis, Esq., Mr. Gaines was appointed Secretary.

On motion of George S. Yerger, Esq. it was

Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed by the Chairman to prepare and report a preamble and resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting on the melancholy occasion.

Whereupon the Chair appointed George S. Yerger, of Vicksburg; John T. McMurran and J. S. Thacher, of Natchez; Geo. H. Gordon, of Woodville; and John B. Coleman, of Port Gibson.

After a recess until 12 o'clock, the Committee, through their chairman, Mr. Yerger, reported the following Preamble and Resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

This Meeting has heard, with feelings of deep and heartfelt sorrow, that it has pleased Almighty God, in his all-wise providence, to remove by death, from his sphere of usefulness on earth, our lamented brother and friend, the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS. His loss is no ordinary one—long will it be felt, not only by his bereaved family and friends, but by the community at large, and by the profession of which he was a bright and noble ornament. Of him it may be truly said, he was one of God's noblest works, "an honest man." If an intellect and genius which it is the lot of but few to possess—if a heart, susceptible of the noblest emotions, and whose every pulsation was the echo of the purest feelings of patriotism and devotion to his country—if the prayers of an afflicted and devoted family, could have saved him from the doom, which sooner or later awaits us all, our lamented friend would yet be among us. But he is gone—and his death is but another memento of the mortality of the body—the immortality of the soul. This, however, is not the time nor the place for eulogy; deeper and holier emotions possess our hearts. Therefore, as a tribute of esteem and respect for his memory—

Resolved, That the members of this meeting are filled with the most profound grief at the loss of a most brilliant and distinguished member of their profession.

Resolved, That for many years the deceased stood at the head of his profession in Mississippi, as a sound and able Jurist, with quick, clear, and comprehensive perceptions of the principles of Justice, and that as a forensic orator, he has been unsurpassed and unrivalled.

Resolved, That in his private and social intercourse, he was amiable and con-

fiding, and generous to a fault. Few men have acquired more numerous and devoted personal attachments; few have ever descended to the grave more deeply lamented.

Resolved, That we affectionately sympathize with, and tender to his afflicted and bereaved family our sincere condolements upon their irreparable loss.

Resolved, That the members of the Bar here present, will attend the funeral of the deceased, as a token of their respect for the memory of their distinguished brother.

Resolved, That the chairman of this meeting, transmit to the family of the deceased, a copy of the proceedings of this meeting.

Resolved, That the Vice Chancellor be requested to have the proceedings of this meeting spread upon the minutes of this Court.

On motion—

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting, after being signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and also the proceedings of the Court in relation to the death of the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS, be published in the newspapers of the City.

J. M. SMILEY, *Chairman.*

R. M. GAINES, *Secretary.*

WEDNESDAY, *July* 3, 1850.

At a meeting of the District Vice Chancery Court, this morning, on motion, it was

Ordered, By the Vice Chancellor, that the proceedings of the meeting of the bar in relation to the death of the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS, be entered on the minutes of the Court.

Which was done accordingly.

E. S. RUSSELL, *Clerk.*

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BAR OF JACKSON.

JACKSON, Monday, July 15, 1850.

Pursuant to notice, the members of the Jackson Bar assembled in the court room of the Chancery Court, to take some measures to express their sentiments relative to the decease of the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS.

On motion, Col. J. F. Foute was called to the Chair, and L. V. Dixon appointed Secretary. After a few remarks from the Chair, more expressive of the object of the meeting, on motion, William Yerger, John I. Guion, Caswell R. Clifton, and Daniel W. Adams were appointed a Committee to prepare a suitable preamble and resolutions, who reported the following, which were unanimously adopted:

The members of this Bar have learned with unfeigned sorrow, that their former companion and brother, the Hon. SEARGENT S. PRENTISS, has departed this life. For upwards of fifteen years Mr. PRENTISS was a citizen of the State of Mississippi, and during that period he established a reputation for legal learning and ability, for high-souled and chivalrous patriotism, and for spotless integrity and unsullied honor, which will endure as long as such qualities and virtues are cherished among us. As an orator, the reputation of Mr. PRENTISS is national. As a lawyer, the judicial annals of our country have been illustrated by no brighter name or loftier intellect. As a politician, he received the unlimited confidence and support of one great party, while his political opponents accorded to him unquestionable integrity of purpose and sincere devotion to his country. It is a source of pleasure and of

pride to his friends to recount these things. Yet to the members of this Bar, who knew him well and intimately, his social qualities and the generous impulses of a heart which always beat responsive to every sentiment of honor, friendship, manliness and truth, render his name more dear than the brightest achievements of his intellect,—therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That as an orator, a statesman and a jurist, the fame of Mr. PRENTISS will adorn the brightest page in the history of the Republic.

2. *Resolved*, That the name of PRENTISS is identified with the history of Mississippi, and his memory will be forever cherished among the dearest and worthiest of her sons.

3. *Resolved*, That in the death of Mr. PRENTISS, the legal profession has lost one of its brightest ornaments, and the members of this Bar have lost a friend, endeared to them by every manly and social virtue which could add to the enjoyment of professional intercourse.

4. *Resolved*, That as a tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased, the members of this Bar will wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days; and that John I. Guion, Charles Scott and Daniel Mayes be appointed a committee to present the foregoing preamble and resolutions to the Supreme and Chancery Courts, and ask that they be entered on the minutes of each of said courts.

5. *Resolved*, That John I. Guion be requested at the January session of the High Court of Errors and Appeals, to deliver an address, commemorative of the distinguished abilities and the exalted private virtues of the deceased.*

6. *Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to the family of Mr. PRENTISS, with the assurance of the sincere condolence of the members of this Bar in their great bereavement.

7. *Resolved*, That the city papers be requested to publish these proceedings.

J. F. FOUTE, *President.*

L. V. DIXON, *Secretary.*

The Proceedings of the Bar of Vicksburg are not at hand.

EULOGY ON S. S. PRENTISS, BY JUDGE McCALEB.

In November, 1850, the resolutions of the Bar of New Orleans were presented to the United States District Court by Mr. Hunton, the U. S. District Attorney. Mr. H. made a brief address, from which the following passages are taken:

May it please the Court—Since your adjournment in July, a distinguished member of the Bar has terminated his earthly career—has been summoned from this to

---

* I am not aware that the eulogy was ever delivered. The death of Judge Guion is announced, as these pages go to the press. He was a gentleman of most noble qualities, and a lawyer of superior ability. At the time of his decease he occupied a seat on the Bench of Mississippi, as he had done in earlier manhood. He had also filled various civil offices; having been President of the Senate, and, for a short period, Governor of the State. He belonged, I believe, to an old Huguenot family of South Carolina. His attachment to Mr. PRENTISS was like that of a brother, and it was most warmly reciprocated. He will long live in the memory of a wide and cultivated circle of friends.—ED.

a higher tribunal; and at a meeting of the members of the Bar of New Orleans, on the occasion of his death, resolutions were adopted expressing regret and sorrow for his loss and admiration for him as a man and a lawyer.

I have been requested to present these resolutions, and to ask that they be inscribed on the records of the Court, which I now do. * * * * *

Under other circumstances it would give me mournful pleasure to trace the brilliant career of that extraordinary man from the time when he arrived in Mississippi, the poor, friendless, stranger boy, till the period of his death—to delineate his character—to tell how, at a single leap, he bounded from obscurity to renown, from the very foot to the topmost round of the ladder of Fame—and to show how, by his indomitable spirit and mighty mind, he was enabled to maintain, against all competitors, that proud position he so suddenly yet so honorably won.

His was a life of constant struggles and of action. He was always engaged in the heat and dust of professional or political efforts. In these efforts he perhaps sometimes indulged in unwarrantable invective and bitterness; yet, I believe all who knew him will bear testimony with me, that after the excitement of deabte was over, he had no memory for anything he had uttered against his adversary; he bore no malice; indeed his breast was filled with the milk of human kindness; he was generous to his foes, faithful to his friends, and devoted to his clients—he made their cause his own.

He came amongst us here with a reputation as a popular orator, almost unequalled in the Southwest; his fame as an advocate had extended all over the Republic; his claims however to high rank as a lawyer were questioned and contested, yet he very soon gave unerring proofs that he was not only the brilliant advocate, but was a sound, acute, and discriminating lawyer; his reputation as such was advancing with steady progress, he was widening and deepening the foundations of his legal learning. Rich imaginative faculties with high intellectual endowments of solid order were united in the mind of Mr. PRENTISS in a higher degree than I have ever known in any other man.

Of his social qualities, his sparkling wit, his humor, his unchanging cheerfulness, I forbear to speak. His eloquent voice will no more be heard; his bright face will no more be seen in these halls. When such a man dies, it is meet and proper that we pause for an instant and take note of the event. I therefore move that these resolutions be placed on the enduring records of the court.

Judge McCaleb, an old and highly honored friend of Mr. PRENTISS, ordered the resolutions to be so entered, and then delivered the following touching eulogy:

In granting the motion just made by the District Attorney, I shall be excused, I trust, if I embrace the occasion to make a few remarks.

Amid the painful regrets we experience at the loss of Mr. PRENTISS, we can still dwell with a melancholy pleasure upon his many noble qualities of head and heart. As the learned, able, and eloquent advocate, he was at all times the object of our warmest admiration; as the kind and confiding friend, the honorable and chivalric gentleman, he had secured our affectionate and lasting regards. In our sorrowful reflections upon his departure from the active scenes of life, we can truly say, that a lawyer of extensive and profound acquirements, an orator of rare powers of

argumentation and of most brilliant fancy, a man of unsullied honor, a patriot of ardent devotion and undaunted courage, and a friend whose generosity knew no bounds, has prematurely passed from the theatre of his usefulness and his fame.

The intellectual endowments of Mr. PRENTISS presented a remarkable example, in which great logical powers and the most vivid imagination were happily blended. With all his readiness in debate, he never failed when an opportunity offered to enter into the most laborious investigations to obtain the mastery of a subject. If he frequently sought to amuse, he rarely failed at the same time to instruct an audience. The rapidity with which he seized the strong points of a case, added to his untiring assiduity, rendered him at all times a most formidable adversary.

In happy exhibitions of extemporaneous eloquence, in striking illustrations by a rapid and harmonious succession of brilliant metaphors, he was rarely if ever excelled. But those who regarded him as a merely eloquent declaimer were widely mistaken in their estimate of his powers. His honorable zeal in the assertion of the rights of a client, his high professional pride, his respect for an adversary and the court, prompted him, in all cases of importance, to a diligent and careful preparation. His own wonderful powers of illustration were at all times supported by the solemn mandates of authority; and the facility with which he was wont to call to his aid the thoughts or effusions of others, proves him to have been a student of an extraordinary memory, and of unremitting diligence. His ideas of intellectual excellence were formed by an attentive study of the best models; and those who enjoyed with him the pleasures of social intercourse, are aware with what humility and veneration he paid his devotions at the shrine of ancient genius. No man with all his admiration of modern excellence, was more prompt in according superiority to those master spirits of antiquity whom modern genius, with all its boasted progress, has yet signally failed to outstrip in the race of true greatness and glory.

It was in 1845 that Mr. PRENTISS removed from the State of Mississippi to this city, with the view to a permanent residence among us, and for the purpose of pursuing the practice of his profession. He came with a brilliant reputation as a lawyer and an orator, and I think it will be admitted by every candid mind, that the public voice in other sections of the Union was not extravagant in its estimate of his abilities. His almost unprecedented success as an advocate before the tribunals of Mississippi; his eloquent efforts in the political arena, before large popular assemblages in different parts of the country, and in the hall of the House of Representatives of the United States, had gained him universal applause, and indisputably established his claims to the possession of talents of the highest order. It was my good fortune to be present at the Capitol at Washington in 1838, during the long and exciting debate which arose out of the Mississippi contested election. The most prominent champions who entered the lists on that interesting occasion, were Mr. PRENTISS himself, then claiming his seat, and Mr. LEGARE, the distinguished jurist and scholar from South Carolina. It is neither my province nor desire to decide to whom belonged the chaplet of victory. It is sufficient to say that the powerful and brilliant efforts of Mr. PRENTISS in the defence of his trying and important position as challenger of all comers, received the most enthusiastic encomia from political friends and foes; and I take pleasure in testifying that from none did I hear a more unqualified expression of approbation than was given to me subsequently in a social interview, by the generous and accomplished antagonist to whom I have alluded.

The speech of Mr. PRENTISS on that occasion was published in the journals of the

day, and is among the very few of his remarkable exhibitions of argument and oratory remaining for the admiration of posterity.

We are told by Macaulay, in his elegant review of the writings of Sir William Temple, that "of the parliamentary eloquence of the celebrated rivals (Shaftsbury and Halifax), we can judge only by report." * * * "Halifax is described by Dryden as

> 'Of piercing wit and pregnant thought,
> Endowed by nature and by learning taught,
> To move assemblies;'

Yet his oratory is utterly and irretrievably lost to us, like that of Somers, of Bolingbroke, of Charles Townshend—of many others, who were accustomed to rise amidst the breathless expectation of senates, and to sit down amidst reiterated bursts of applause. Old men, who had lived to admire the eloquence of Pultney, in its meridian, and that of Pitt in its splendid dawn, still murmured that they had heard nothing like the great speeches of Lord Halifax on the Exclusion Bill." These observations on what must ever be regarded as most important omissions in the annals of parliamentary and forensic eloquence in England, remind us forcibly of similar omissions in our own history—omissions the more to be regretted because they deprive us forever, as in the case of our lamented friend, of the noble sentiments luminously arrayed, of those with whom for years we have daily enjoyed the delights of social intercourse.

In the case of Mr. Prentiss, the omission is the more unaccountable, and perhaps the more unpardonable, because of the great advantages he possessed of a finished education, and of his extraordinary readiness as a writer as well as a speaker. It was indeed a source of regret among his countless admirers, that with all his professional pride, with all his aspirations for professional distinction, and all his ambition for victory in the political arena, he should have manifested such utter indifference to posthumous fame. He was sensitive in everything relating to his character as an honorable man; he was careful to preserve untarnished the fair escutcheon of an honorable name; yet in the great intellectual conflicts in which he was so frequently engaged, he was content with the contemporary applause so bountifully bestowed, and looked no further. Posterity indeed will never be able to appreciate his intrinsic worth; but his powerful logic, his brilliant wit, the radiant coruscations of his fancy, his keen sarcasm and his melting pathos will be treasured in the grateful recollections of those who were permitted to witness their effect. They will long be remembered as the

> Fruits of a genial morn and glorious noon,
> A deathless part of him who died too soon.

I have alluded to the professional pride of Mr. Prentiss. No man regarded with more profound veneration the luminaries of the law, and no man was more emulous of their triumphs. He felt that the science itself presented the noblest field for the exertion of the intellectual faculties, and was deeply sensible of the high responsibilities assumed by all who embark in it as a means of acquiring a livelihood. He treated with scorn the vulgar prejudices against it, founded upon the faults or delinquencies of its unworthy members. It was the profession which, in

his opinion, furnished the materials to form the statesman. It was the profession from which the patriot could provide the most efficient weapons to vindicate the freedom and honor of his country. The boldest and most devoted champions of popular liberty, in every civilized age, and every civilized clime, were, in his opinion, to be found in the ranks of the legal profession. He believed that in our own country they afforded one of the strongest bonds of our National Union. His sentiments on this subject were delivered with characteristic energy and zeal, and were suggested by the invitation with which he had been honored by the Law Association of Harvard University to deliver the address at its annual celebration. I can never forget the feelings of gratified pride he expressed on the reception of that invitation, or the emotions of regret he betrayed at being compelled, by his feeble health, to decline it. Had his physical strength been adequate to the task, Petrarch in the solitudes of Vaucluse, never responded with a prouder enthusiasm to the summons from the metropolis of the world, to receive in its capital and from the hands of a Senator of Rome, the laurel crown as the reward of poetic merit than would our gifted orator have obeyed the request of the members of his noble profession in that ancient University. But the triumph of Petrarch was not reserved for our friend. His melancholy fate more solemnly reminds us of that other devoted child of Italian song, who had "poured his spirit over Palestine," and whose summons to the honors of the laurel wreath was but a summons to his grave.

We feel that it was but yesterday we beheld our friend here in this hall in the ardent and energetic discharge of his professional duties, with a countenance pale and emaciated, but radiant with the fire of genius—with a frame feeble and exhausted from the cruel ravages of disease, but with a spirit undaunted—a mind ever luminous, and exhibiting in every effort its almost superhuman energy. His mighty soul seemed "swelling beyond the measure of the chains" that bound it within its frail tenement. His surrender at last to the King of Terrors was the result of another victory of genius over a favorite son, and forcibly recalls the lines of the poet, in allusion to the death of a kindred spirit:

> "'Twas thy own genius gave the final blow,
> And helped to plant the wound that laid thee low;
> So the struck eagle, stretched upon the plain,
> No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
> Viewed his own feather in the fatal dart,
> And winged the shaft that quivered in his heart."

Amid the excitement of the forum he was unconscious of the rapid decay of the organs of life. Heedless alike of the solemn admonitions of friends and the increasing debility of an overtasked and broken constitution, he continued, day after day, to redouble his exertions, and seemed to regulate his physical action by the mighty energies of a mind that scorned all sympathy with the feeble frame on which it was dependent for support. One of the most important arguments made by him before this tribunal—I allude to that in the case of the heirs of Pultney *vs.* The City of Lafayette—was delivered from his seat; his declining health rendering it impossible for him to stand in the presence of the court; and yet, I may with confidence appeal to his able and generous antagonist on that occasion, to bear testimony to the systematic arrangement and masterly ability with which every argument, and

all the learning that could tend to the elucidation of the important questions involved, were presented to the court.

I have thus, gentlemen of the Bar, in a manner perhaps somewhat unusual, though I trust not inappropriate to the occasion, availed myself of the opportunity afforded by the presentation of your eloquent resolutions to mingle my own feeble voice with the strains of eulogy which have already been heard, in heartfelt tributes to private and public worth; to add my own humble offering at the shrine of genius; to hang my own garland of sorrow over the tomb of a long-cherished friend:

> "To mourn the vanished beam—and add my mite
> Of praise, in payment of a long delight."

The following letter of Mr. Clay will be here in place:

My Dear Sir:—

At the moment of my leaving Newport, I received your friendly letter, in respect to the death of your lamented brother, S. S. Prentiss. I had previously heard of the sad event, with emotions of sorrow and grief, which have been rarely exceeded in my breast by any similar occurrence. His loss to his estimable wife and his infant children, to yourself and his amiable and intelligent sister, to his beloved mother, to his numerous friends (and to none more than me), and to his country, which he so much loved and so ably served, can never be repaired.

I derived a melancholy satisfaction from perusing your narrative of the incidents attending the last hours of his mortal existance.

I am glad that you have resolved to prepare for publication some memorials of your noble brother. His memory is fully worthy of it, and the work could not be in more competent and faithful hands. I should be very happy to comply with your wish that I would supply some estimate of your brother's character and talents, if I felt myself qualified to do ample justice to them. But, intimate as was our friendship, it so happened that I never heard him, except on three occasions—once, when he was addressing the House of Representatives on his own contested election from Mississippi; when he addressed me, in your presence, at Vicksburg; and on the subject of the famine in Ireland, at the public meeting in New Orleans, where we both spoke. We had but few opportunities of personal intercourse. For at New Orleans, where I passed two winters after his removal to that city, he was so engrossed by his professional engagements, that I met with him occasionally, and then chiefly at dinner, at the house of some friend. Several letters reciprocally passed between us, all relating to public affairs, except one, and that related to a painful affair which he had with a grandson of mine, which was happily accommodated. In that letter he expressed, in manly terms, his regret at the occurrence, and his satisfaction with its honorable and amicable termination, in which his friendly relations to me exercised a proper influence. I am very sorry that I have not preserved any of his letters.

If I were to express, in a few words, my impression of your brother's mental character, as a public speaker, I should say that he was distinguished by a rich, chaste and boundless imagination, the exhaustless resources of which, in beautiful language and happy illustrations, he brought to the aid of a logical power, which

he wielded to a very great extent. Always ready and prompt, his conceptions seemed to me almost intuitive. His voice was fine, softened and, I think, improved, by a slight lisp, which an attentive observer could discern.

The great theatres of eloquence and public speaking in the United States are the the Legislative Hall, the Forum and the Stump, without adverting to the Pulpit. I have known some of my contemporaries eminently successful on one of these theatres, without being able to exhibit any remarkable ability on the others. Your brother was brilliant and successful on them all.

* * * Requesting you to present my affectionate regards to your sister,

I am truly,

WASHINGTON, *Sep.* 1850. Your friend, &c.

H. CLAY.

The following is an extract from a letter of ex-Gov. Crittenden, dated WASHINGTON, *Nov.* 20, 1850:

I was a sincere sympathizer in the grief that was felt so widely at the death of your talented and noble brother, S. S. PRENTISS. I knew him—and it was impossible to know him without feeling for him admiration and love. His genius, so rich and rare; his heart, so warm, generous, and magnanimous; and his manners, so graceful and so genial, could not fail to impress those sentiments on all who approached him. Eloquence was part of his nature, and over his private conversations as well as his public speeches, it scattered its sparkling jewels with more than royal profusion. Although our relations were always most friendly, it so happened that our correspondence by writing was very inconsiderable, and furnishes nothing, I regret to say, that could aid you in the fraternal task in which I am glad to see you are engaged, of preparing a biography or memoir of your deceased brother. I feel the liveliest interest in the success of your undertaking, and hope that the monument you will thus erect to his memory, may be as high and as bright as were his virtues and his genius.

Mr. Webster wrote to me from Marshfield, some time before his death: "After my return to Washington, I will take much pleasure in conveying to you the estimate, entertained by me, of the character and talents of your lamented brother." But the pressure of public cares hindered the fulfillment of this friendly promise, until it was too late.

THE END.

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